NEW

HISTORY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE MYSTERIOUS OTHERWORLD

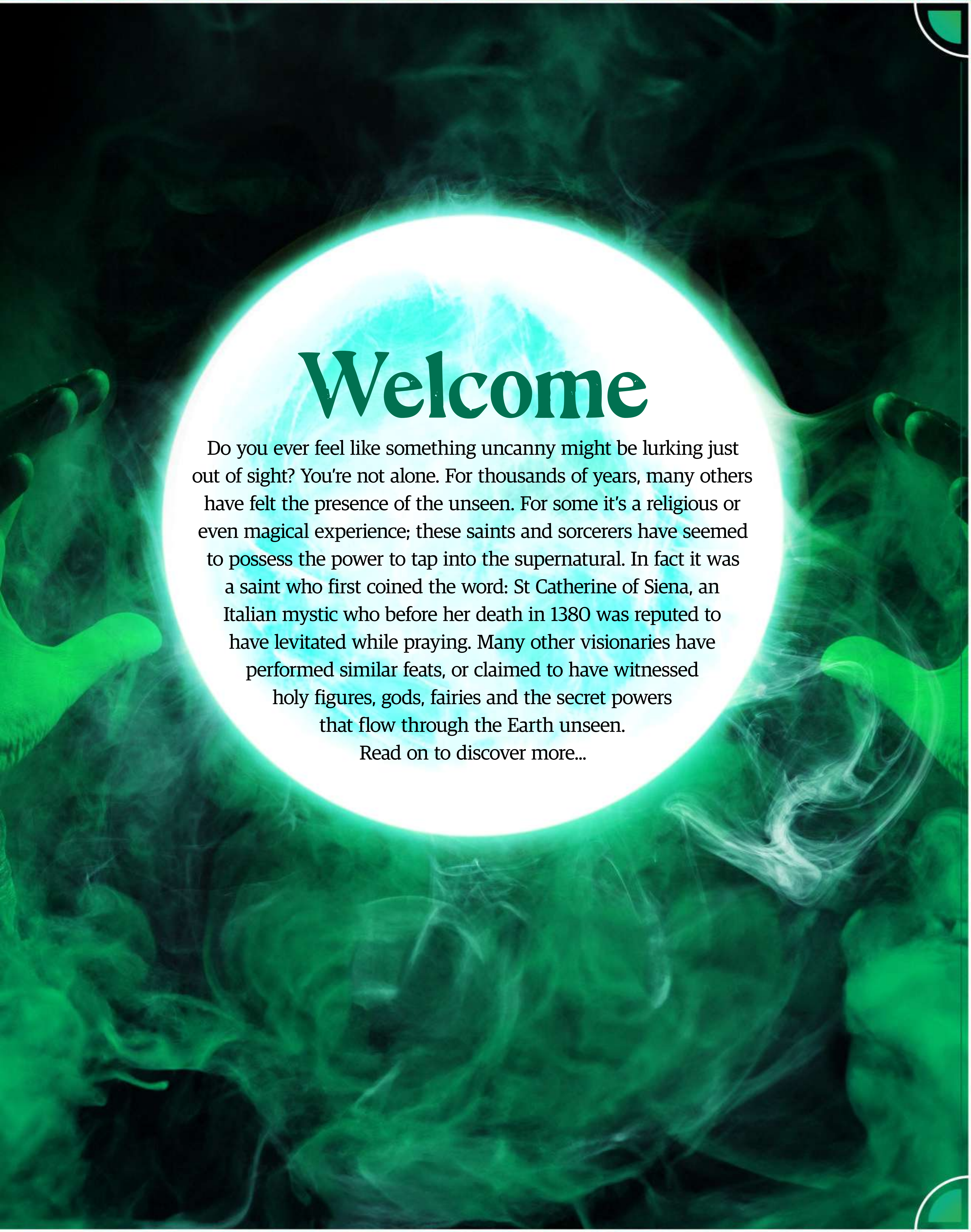
From the makers of ALL ABOUT HISTORY

DO YOU DARE VISIT THESE PARANORMAL PLACES?

Sites of power ✦ Faerie magic ✦ Ghosts & hauntings

Digital Edition

FUTURE
FIRST EDITION



Welcome

Do you ever feel like something uncanny might be lurking just out of sight? You're not alone. For thousands of years, many others have felt the presence of the unseen. For some it's a religious or even magical experience; these saints and sorcerers have seemed to possess the power to tap into the supernatural. In fact it was a saint who first coined the word: St Catherine of Siena, an Italian mystic who before her death in 1380 was reputed to have levitated while praying. Many other visionaries have performed similar feats, or claimed to have witnessed holy figures, gods, fairies and the secret powers that flow through the Earth unseen.

Read on to discover more...

Contents

6 **In the shadow of the supernatural**
Since the dawn of mankind people have turned to otherworldly explanations to make sense of events and apparitions that seem to defy the laws of nature

Magic & miracles

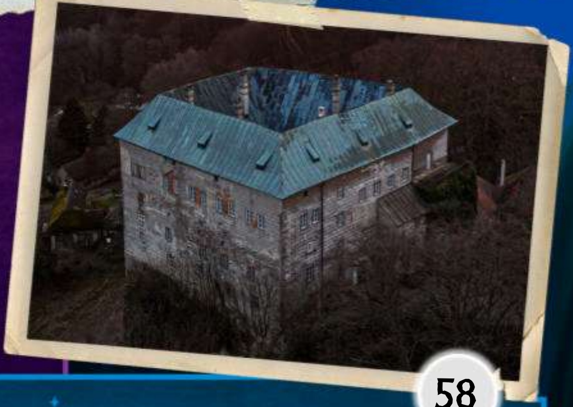
14 **It's a miracle!**
Miraculous events caused by the gods and holy people occur in many religions, but why they happen is a mystery

18 **Mysterious miracles and magical events**
Strange phenomena have always drawn crowds and history is replete with miracles like the ten listed here

26 **When the sun danced**
In 1917 Portugal was attempting to crack down on religion. Then three children reported an encounter with the Virgin Mary

28 **Witches, wizards, sorcerers and spellcasters**
Discover a selection of mystical figures from myth, legend, and history, some of whom were a force to be reckoned with

38 **The Premonitions Bureau**
In the wake of a terrible disaster, one British man attempted to harness the predictive powers of psychics to avert future tragedies



Strange places

44 **Leylines and earth mysteries**
From Stonehenge to ley lines, mysterious structures and energies the world over continue to puzzle us

48 **The Ploutonion at Hieropolis**
A temple with a deadly secret once thought to be the gateway to Hades

50 **Where worlds meet**
Explore some of the arcane places of power found around the world

58 **Houska Castle**
This Czech fortress is said to guard a portal into hell, and was once occupied by occult-obsessed Nazis

60 **Cursed landscapes**
The flipside to places of power are the cursed locations throught the globe that are reputed to be the domains of terror

Ghosts & hauntings

72 Ghostlore
Ghosts and apparitions have haunted the imagination worldwide for centuries, and can scare or offer comfort to the living

82 Investigating the paranormal
Hunting for evidence of ghosts became a fascination for paranormal investigators as recording technology advanced

86 The Enfield Poltergeist
In 1970s London, an unexplained and evil entity began to to terrorise an ordinary family in a notorious poltergeist case

88 The haunted house
The idea of the haunted house crosses cultural boundaries, but what is it that fascinates us about these buildings?

92 The Dodleston messages
During the 1980s, a sleepy British village became the scene of a bizarre situation involving a BBC Micro computer

94 Haint misbehavin'
The African-American Gullah Geechee community's ghostlore has its roots in West Africa but informs Southern USA folk traditions too

Weird creatures

100 Monsters and mythical beasts
Lurking in the unknown regions of the world, monsters have always fascinated us

110 Heavenly creatures
Far from being far away in heaven, many believe that angels are all around us

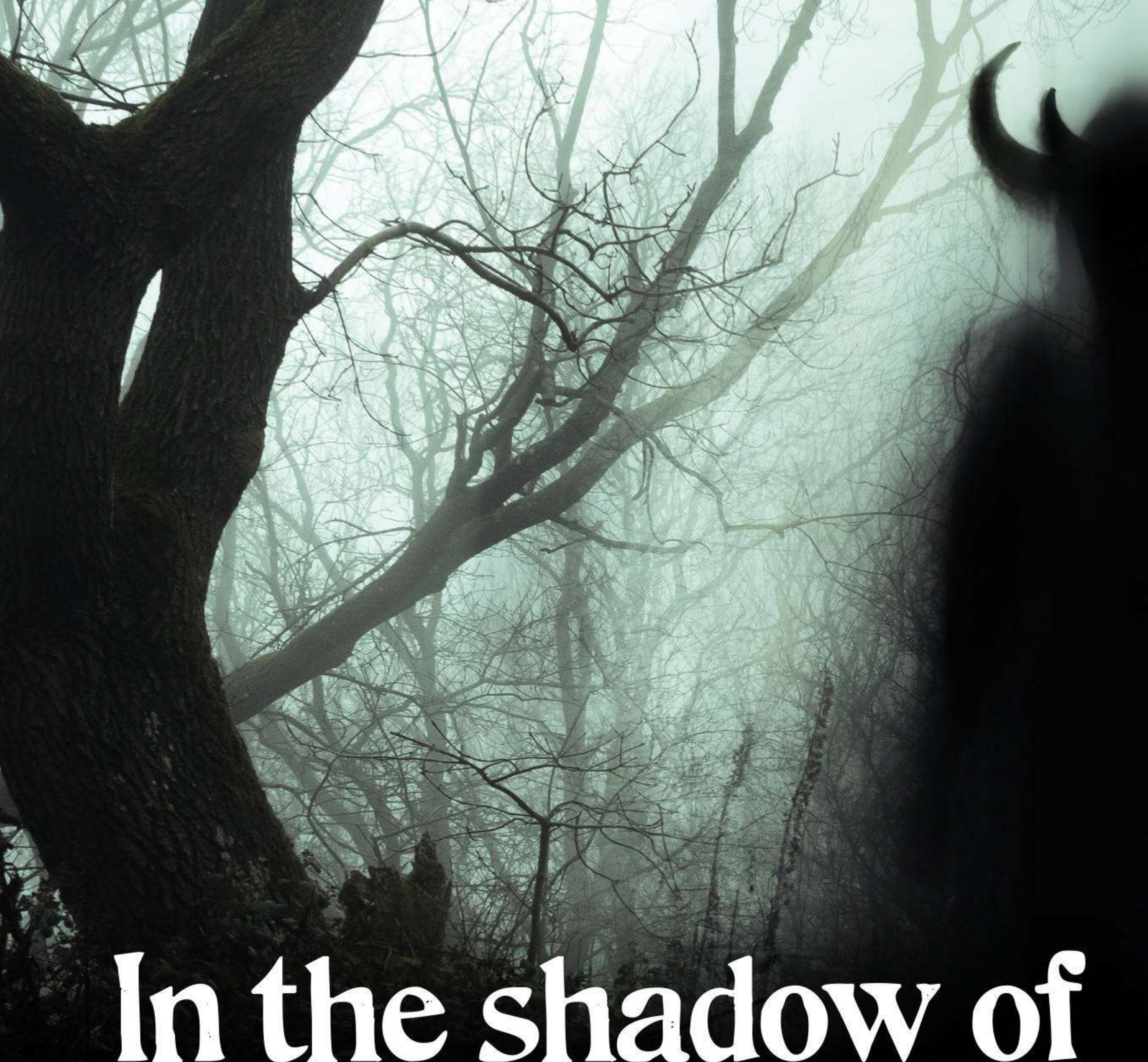
114 Subtle bodies
The real jinn of folklore are far from the wish-granting genies of fairy tales

116 Demons from Hell
Since the dawn of civilisation humans have believed in the terrifying denizens of darkness, evil and death

120 Creatures of the night
For the creatures of the night, death is not the end but the beginning of a long and complicated afterlife

124 Spirits of place
From the Roman genius loci to the guardian spirit belief found across Asia, many cultures honour the supernatural protectors that watch over them

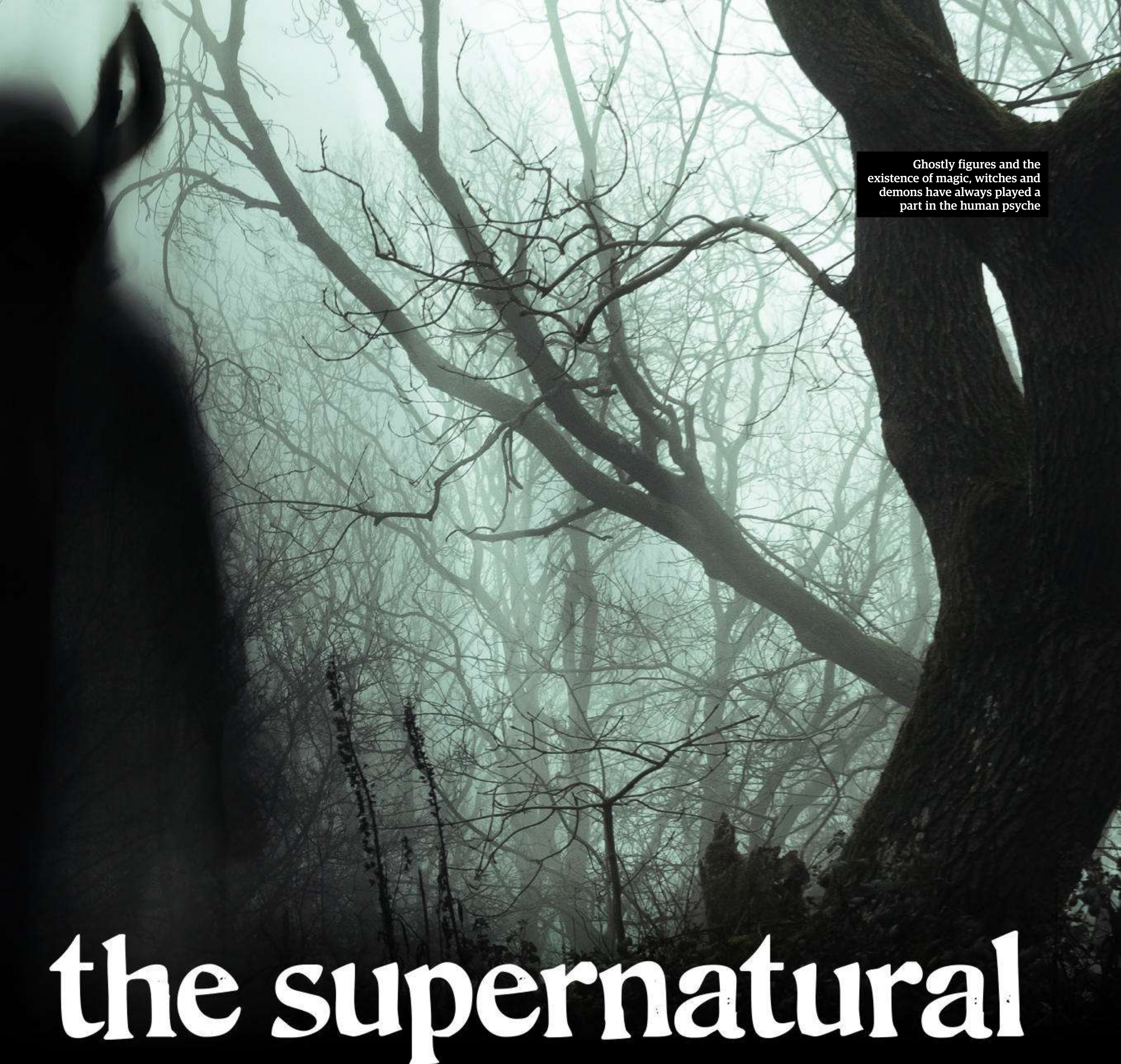
126 Be fae, do crimes
From innocent woodland sprites to mysterious agents of chaos, the fairy folk have emerged from folklore to occupy a unique place in the culture of humankind



In the shadow of

Since the dawn of mankind people have turned to otherworldly explanations in their efforts to make sense of events and apparitions that seem to defy the laws of nature

Written by Charles Ginger



Ghostly figures and the existence of magic, witches and demons have always played a part in the human psyche

the supernatural

Amah glanced over his shoulder at the houses hunched together behind him, their silhouettes fading with the setting sun. His mother was always warning him not to venture out this late, but as he made his way down to the river it was difficult to remember why. Ever since he was a child the elders had spoken in hushed tones of demons who prowled the shadows in search of souls to steal. But with 14 summers behind him, he was no longer a child, he was a man, and real men didn't need to ask permission to meet their friends. It wasn't like they'd be going that far any way. And yet somehow Hurin was late.

Amah sat down at the water's edge and dipped his feet in. He lay back against the bank and looked up at the darkening sky. Other than the chorus of crickets, the air was still. Memories of the day drifted through his mind. A loud splash snatched him out of his thoughts. He sat up and peered out over the river. He could just about make out a human-like figure standing up to its neck in the water. It moved towards him slowly, each stride revealing more of it above the surface. "Hurin?"

The entity gave no reply as it edged closer. At this distance it looked too tall to be human. "Hurin?" His quivering voice turned into a gargled scream as the creature stepped into the half light of the moon to reveal empty pits where its eyes should have been.

The air snatched in Amah's throat. Everything inside him urged him to run, but he couldn't move. It was almost on him now, a wide grin splitting its gaunt face, jagged teeth protruding from its grey mouth. It stretched out a bony hand and grabbed hold of Amah's ankle. His skin turned numb at its icy touch. He wanted to fight, to kick it off and run back to his mother, but he was frozen. He should've listened to her. He should never have come here alone. As he slipped into the depths he could almost hear her warning him. "Beware the gallu."

Image source: Getty

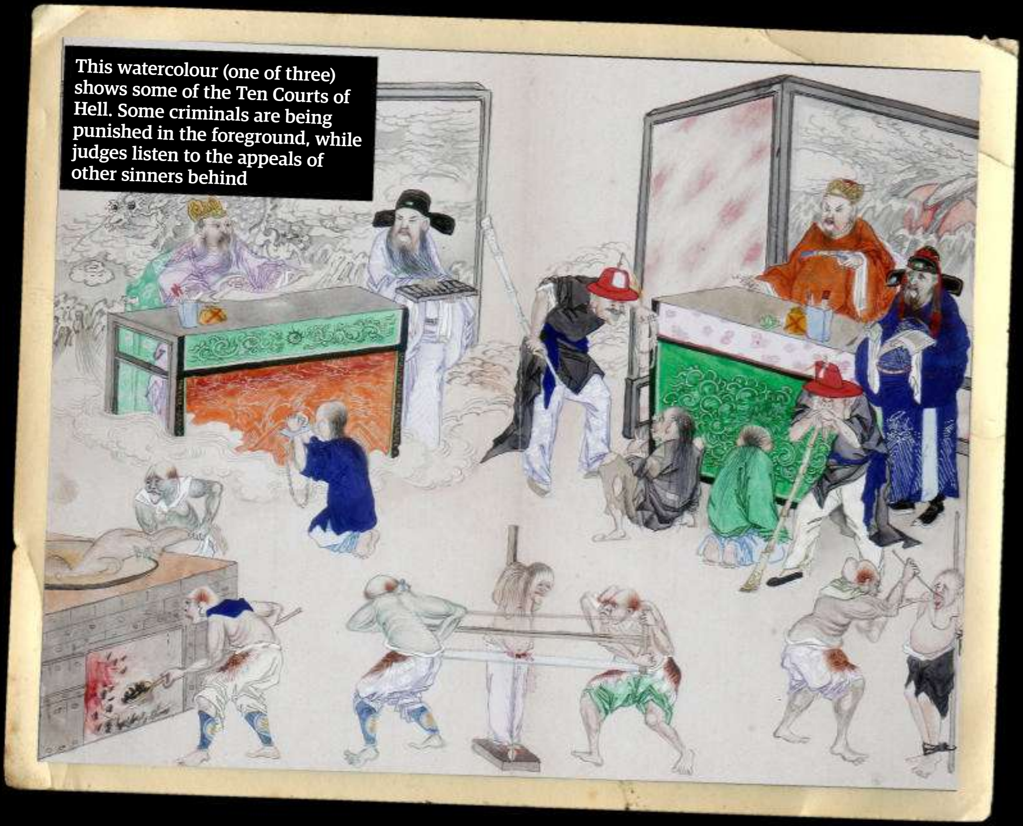
DEATH IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Since people first began to construct what we know as civilisations, belief in the supernatural has permeated daily life. From venerating dead ancestors to warding off the servants of the underworld, the fear of entities that defy the laws of nature is an inherently human trait, whether you're a high priest in ancient Egypt or a camera-wielding ghosthunter of the modern day.

Remarkably given its deep roots, the word 'supernatural' was first used in the 15th century by Catherine of Siena, an Italian mystic who was made a saint in 1461. Yet while the ancient world may have lacked a specific term by which to define strange events beyond their understanding, they knew only too well the powers of the angels, demons and divine figures who shaped their lives.

Founders of the oldest known civilisation, the Sumerians of southern Mesopotamia (today Iraq), believed in many gods (chief among them being An, god of the heavens) demons and ghosts. Having been brought into being when the gods shaped humans out of clay and literally breathed life into them, the Sumerians viewed themselves as upholders of the natural order as ordained by the heavens, but when their time came to pass they descended into an underworld known as Irkalla. Here, the spirits of the dead would live on among the shadows and pools of the land of no return, sustained by the offerings of the relatives they'd left behind (it was thought that the dead ate dust and only drank if water was poured into their grave). Failure to attend to the correct burial and sacrificial rituals was thought to have devastating consequences.

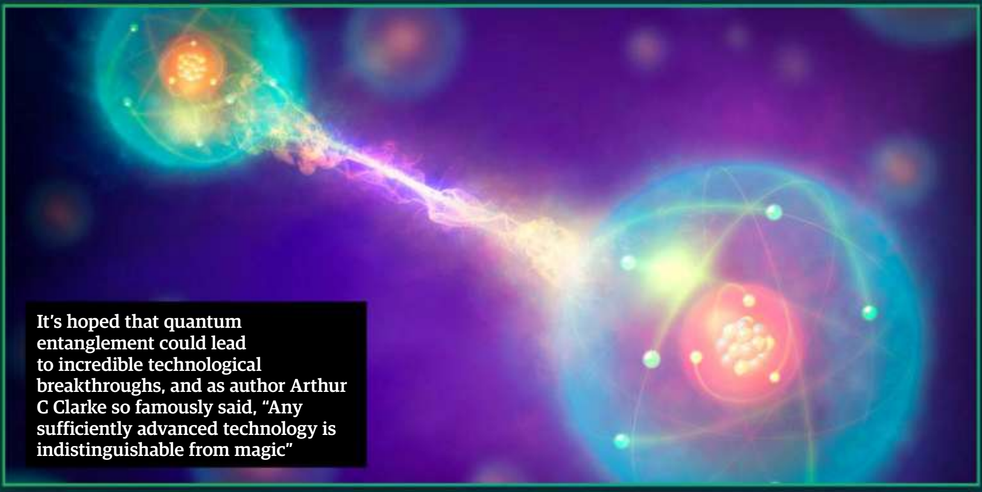
Angered by such neglect, a vengeful spirit would be granted permission by the gods to

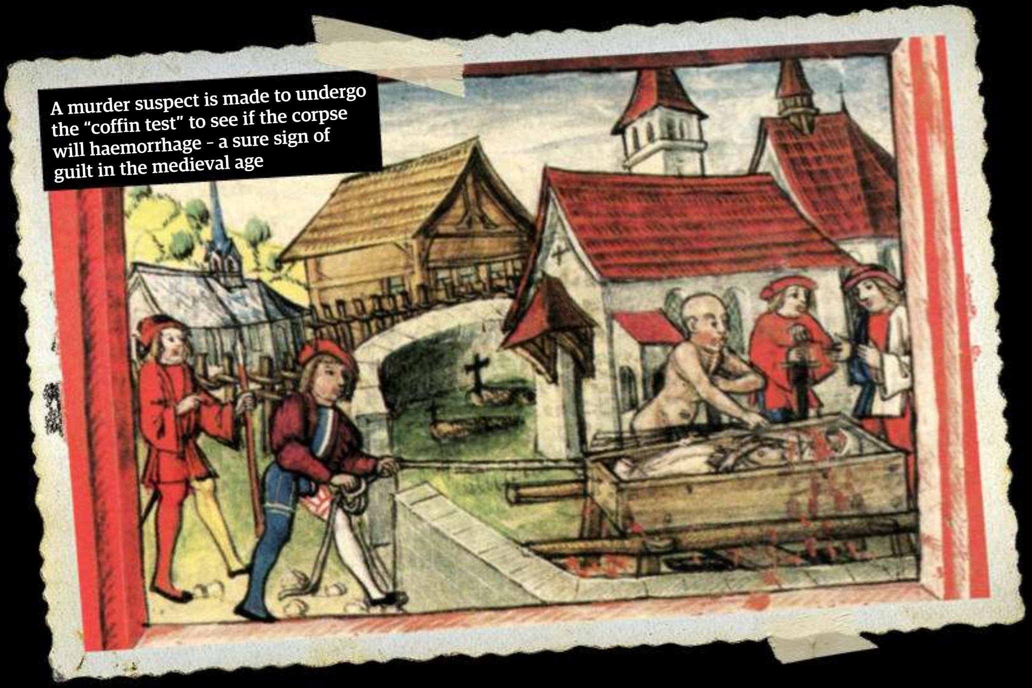

This watercolour (one of three) shows some of the Ten Courts of Hell. Some criminals are being punished in the foreground, while judges listen to the appeals of other sinners behind

> *"Remarkably given its deep roots, the word 'supernatural' was first used in the 15th century by Catherine of Siena, an Italian mystic who was made a saint in 1461"*

WHAT IS THIS SORCERY?!

We take things like magnets and radios for granted today, everyday tools that seem completely normal to us because we understand how they work. But there was once a time when such forces would have been viewed as supernatural. Magnetite was regarded as having special powers by wizards, witches and even doctors, and warriors would often wear a piece of it for protection in battle. Given that it wasn't until William Gilbert scientifically studied magnetism in the 16th century that its properties were better understood, it's easy to see why people used to think two objects being pulled apart or pushed together by some unseen force was magic. As for radio, when these incredible machines first emerged some listeners believed they were hearing voices from the spirit realm. Stranger still is the discovery of quantum entanglement, something that Einstein described as "spooky action at a distance". This is when two particles interact with each other and share their physical states. This only happens for an instant, and it can occur regardless of how far apart the particles are. Nobel laureate Richard Feynman has famously said, "If you think you understand quantum mechanics, you don't understand quantum mechanics." If scientists today are still working to fathom the intricacies of this mind-bending phenomenon, imagine what our ancestors would have made of it.


It's hoped that quantum entanglement could lead to incredible technological breakthroughs, and as author Arthur C Clarke so famously said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic"



A murder suspect is made to undergo the "coffin test" to see if the corpse will haemorrhage – a sure sign of guilt in the medieval age

return to the world of the living and haunt the people who had disrespected their memory. Yet while this type of ghost was the most common in Mesopotamia (a region that was also home to the Akkadians, who would eventually conquer their southern neighbours), the threat of a finger-wagging grandmother appearing at the end of the bed was certainly not the only supernatural force to be reckoned with.

Demons were a constant presence in Sumerian – and Akkadian – life. To a modern reader, a demon (maskim in Sumerian) is a malevolent being bent on death and destruction, and while the thought of being dragged off to hell by a member of the gallu or udug class of demons did indeed terrorise people, not all of these formidable beings were evil.

Pazuzu, ruler of the wind demons, wielded immense power that he could turn to both benevolent and malicious ends, and it was his protection (magic that is deployed to rebuff the advances of evil spirits is known as apotropaic) that women sought against the predations of the hideous Lamashtu.

Daughter of the sky god, An, Lamashtu sported the head of a lioness, the teeth and ears of a donkey and walked on bird-like feet complete with razor-sharp talons. This monstrous demoness would harass women giving birth and attempt to snatch their babies, whose bones she would chew while imbibing their blood. She was also known to make children sick. Thankfully, Sumerians could use various rituals in order to ward Lamashtu off, one of which entailed offering bread and water to a figurine shaped in her likeness. This was then attached to a black dog, who was tasked with carrying the figure before it was placed by the head of an ailing child for three days, but not before a piglet's heart was wedged into the little statue's mouth. Further food sacrifices and incantations were to be repeated three times a day, then on the third day the figurine was buried outside near a wall.

Regardless of whether a baby was wrestled from its mother by a demon, a child failed to recover from an illness or a person died of natural causes, the Sumerians believed they were largely at the mercy of the gods and their minions, to the extent that how a person conducted themselves in this life had no bearing on their treatment in the next, an assumption that was not shared by any other of the great early civilisations.

THE BRIDGE TO PARADISE

The concept of a person drifting off into the afterlife upon death is an idea shared among many, if not all, faiths, and much like the Sumerians, the people of ancient China believed that a spirit must first enter the underworld before seeking salvation. However, their view of how divine deliverance was to be achieved differed from the Mesopotamian doctrine.

This bronze statue of Pazuzu dates from the 8th century BCE. It was the spirit of Pazuzu that possessed Regan in the horror classic *The Exorcist*

The Chinese held that a departed soul consisted of a yin element known as the po that was associated with the grave and a yang component called the hun that was connected with ancestral tablets. These separate parts in turn became three souls: one that remained with the grave, one that was bound for the Ten Courts of Judgement in hell, and one that stayed in or near the tablets that were kept in hierarchical order at an altar in the family home.

Similarly to the Sumerians, the Chinese believed that a spirit denied a proper burial or subsequent offerings would take the form of a guei, a ghost that roamed the world wreaking havoc. To keep such an apparition at bay, incense was to be burned every day on the altar. But their work didn't end there.

The process of mourning and overseeing funerary rituals was a natural result of a death, but they also served a more practical function: helping the dead to navigate hell quickly. The vast majority of people had committed sins for which they would need to atone in the courts of the underworld before they could escape to heaven, and relatives took their role in engineering this release seriously. Unless of course the dead concerned had lived a truly exceptional life. These extremely rare souls could secure instant deliverance due to their exemplary record and were offered a route out via one of two bridges.

The Golden Bridge led to the Pure Land of the West, which was separate to the cosmos. Presided over by Buddha Amitabha, this wondrous realm promised nirvana – the release from the otherwise endless cycle of birth and rebirth, a state of being that all Buddhists strive to reach. The other choice, the Silver Bridge, stretched into heaven, which was considered a crucial part of the cosmos. Ruled by the Jade Emperor and home to gods and their officials, here a new soul could become a god and play a vital part in cosmic matters. Both options were indeed a considerable spiritual upgrade on languishing in the murky depths of hell as demonic judges debated your sins, but determining which bridge to cross was a colossal dilemma. Rebirth as a god, or eternal bliss?

KNIVES OUT

Ancient Greeks and Romans were not confronted with such a quandary, but that isn't to say that they didn't face their own spiritual turmoil. Flexible when it came to absorbing the deities and practices of other peoples, the Greeks in fact borrowed a lot of their mythology (and their attendant promises of suffering and salvation)

Image source: Getty; Alamy

This Egyptian hippo knife is decorated with pictures of supernatural beings. This particular weapon was used to protect a nursery

from the Egyptians, who believed that magic pervaded all aspects of life.

From the lioness goddess Sekhmet to the demonic guardians who watched over tombs and the gates of the underworld, the land of the pharaohs was dominated by the presence of Heka, the god of magic and to whom high priests would call when healing the sick or attempting to discern the movements of the heavens.

Nothing if not practical, the Egyptians did not merely cower in their temples praying for the gods to guide or spare them. Instead they fashioned a range of objects that could be used to defend against the menace of the supernatural. These included curved swords hewn from hippo ivory that were incised with pictures of knife-wielding demons and clay statues of cobras that were relied on to protect a person's ka (spirit). Archaeologists have unearthed 125 fragments from these serpentine figurines.

Theosophy unites Eastern theology with Western science and philosophy and influenced the 20th century New Age movement

Evidence for an unwavering belief in the supernatural – in particular an afterlife – among the great ancient civilisations is ubiquitous, but that is not to say that everyone readily subscribed to the view that mysterious forces dictated everything. Rather fittingly, given his people's love of both democracy and debating, it was a Greek philosopher who first started to question the notion that diseases were a form of divine retribution.

Hailed as the father of medicine, Hippocrates rejected the idea that ailments such as epilepsy (known at the time as the 'sacred disease') were caused by unseen forces. Written around 400 BCE by an unknown author, the treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, which is part of a collection of 60 such texts that comprise the *Hippocratic Corpus*, states with confidence that epileptic fits were caused by a disease, not a vengeful deity: "Concerning the disease which is called 'sacred', in my view it is no more divine or sacred than any other disease, but has a nature and a definite cause."

Equally as telling was the author's lambasting of those who professed mystical abilities, people who had the temerity to claim they could "bring down the moon, to eclipse the sun, to make storm and good weather, rain and drought, the sea impassable and the earth barren, and all the other such things."

All of this sounds like an unequivocal dismissal of magic and the supernatural in its entirety. But any student of history will appreciate that it is rarely so simple. Despite the likes of Hippocrates and many other philosophers and physicians refuting age-old accepted wisdoms in their quest to uncover the true nature of the world, they did not shun magic or the divine completely. After all, the Hippocratic Oath implores "all the gods and goddesses to witness, that I will observe and keep this underwritten oath, to the utmost of my power and judgement". Even as he sought to further man's understanding of science, Hippocrates, like all ancient Greeks, never forgot that the universe was steered by the heavens.

TOIL AND TROUBLE

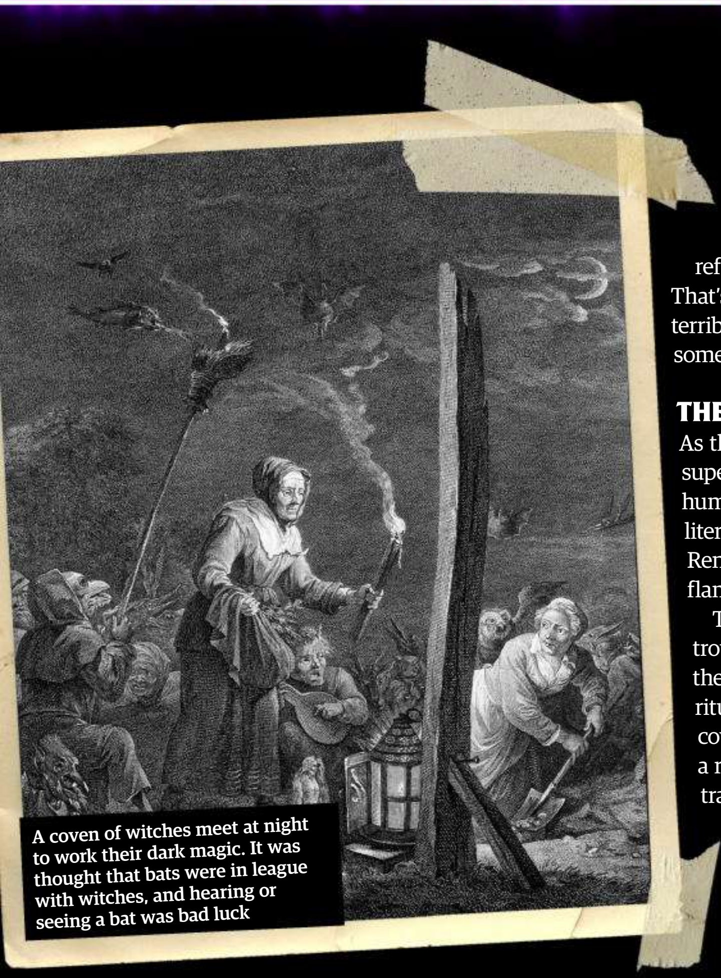
Imperial collapse. War. Famine. Plague. The Dark Ages certainly earned the title the hard way. Stretching from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE to the Renaissance, this lengthy period of upheaval resulted in a widespread cultural and intellectual decline. Ravaged by outbreaks including the Black Death, ruled by volatile kings and constantly harangued about the dangers of sinning by a Catholic Church that offered the only source of spiritual protection while simultaneously labelling science as heresy, it's no wonder that the people of medieval Europe turned to the supernatural in their efforts to come to terms with the chaos swirling around them.

Unsurprisingly, disease was a major concern, a curse that was said to be inflicted on sinners or those in need of a test of their faith. The alignment of the stars was also blamed for sickness. But arguably the most malevolent force a medieval person could encounter was a witch.

These despised weavers of black magic were held accountable for a wide range of misfortunes, from impotence and infertility to illnesses and even death. It was thought that they benefited from the aid of animal sidekicks such as cats and ravens, who would accompany them to their nocturnal meetings, where such horrendous acts as cannibalism and incest were committed.

Thankfully, the medieval masses were not completely powerless in the face of these malign, wart-nosed agents of misery. Counter-magic provided by 'cunning folk' could frustrate a witch's curse, as could amulets, glass spheres known as witch balls, and burying the head of a

Helen Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society. Born in the Russian Empire, she claimed to have travelled widely and met a group of ancient masters who sent her to Tibet



A coven of witches meet at night to work their dark magic. It was thought that bats were in league with witches, and hearing or seeing a bat was bad luck

horse inside a building, the reasoning behind the latter course of action being that horses repelled witches, hence why they had to ride brooms instead of steeds. It was this faith in equine protection that led to the tradition of hanging horseshoes over doorways (provided the shoe was made of iron and had fallen off a horse naturally).

When these benign efforts to keep witches at bay failed, a far more lethal option was at hand. Thousands of poor souls, the vast majority of them women, were hanged, drowned, burned or otherwise put to death across Europe, with the witch panic reaching its peak between the 14th and 17th centuries.

The use of capital punishment was an unquestioned part of maintaining law and order, one that gave rise to some unusual beliefs. It was thought that touching someone before they were set to hang brought good luck, and the right hand of an executed person possessed healing properties and magical powers.

A method that was used in some cases to ascertain guilt was cruentation. Originating in Germany before spreading across the continent and even as far as North America, this entailed asking a murder suspect to touch the body of the victim to see if the corpse bled or moved. If it did then the suspect was obviously guilty.

These beliefs may seem preposterous to the modern reader, but some of the habits our ancestors indulged in live on. Saying 'bless you' when someone sneezes is one such example. During the Dark Ages people feared that the devil could sneak into the body via the open mouth of someone sneezing. It was also said that breaking a mirror symbolised the wrenching apart of a person and their soul, as a reflection was in fact an image of the soul. That's why it was considered to be such a terrible omen when a mirror was broken, something most people fear today.

THESE ENLIGHTENED TIMES

As the lifespan of such ideas testify, superstitions are hard-wired into the human psyche. Even the explosion of art, literature and science that comprised the Renaissance could not extinguish the flames of the supernatural.

The Victorians were particularly troubled by death and events beyond their control and undertook all manner of rituals in order to cope. These included covering mirrors to prevent the spirit of a recently deceased person becoming trapped; removing the feathers from pillows to ease dying as these were believed to hold the dead back; informing bees of a recent death so as to avoid them flying away; and touching a corpse to stop its spirit haunting you.

It was during the reign of Queen Victoria that the system of Theosophy was established in New York by a Russian mystic named Helena Blavatsky. This esoteric new religious movement teaches its followers that a secret brotherhood of Masters, predominantly based in Tibet, will one day succeed in resurrecting an old faith that will supersede all others. It currently boasts a membership of over 26,000, further proof that living in accordance with the commands of otherworldly beings is far from a relic of the past.

So just how do we think about the supernatural in the 21st century? As with most things, culture and faith play a fundamental role in shaping one's views. When the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread across the globe in 2020, many American Christians pointed to it as a form of divine punishment, and approximately 90 per cent of Tunisian Muslims fear the glare of the evil eye, an envious look from a jealous person that can cause physical harm (a menace that concerned the Romans enough that they wore phallic amulets to defend against it).

Even in an age of seemingly endless scientific discoveries enabled by brilliant minds and breathtaking technological advances, the notion of ghosts, witches and demons, to name just a few paranormal entities, continue to find a place in our hearts and minds. Thousands of years and countless explorations of the natural world might have furnished us with knowledge our ancestors could only have dreamed of, but they haven't altered the fact that humans continue – and probably always will – attempt to explain the inexplicable by way of the supernatural.

WHY DO WE BELIEVE?

It's not just churchgoers who have a tendency to believe in ghosts…

Religion and the supernatural readily intertwine, faith in a higher power easily overlapping with an acceptance in eerie entities and forces we cannot see. However, theism is not a necessity when it comes to believing in the otherworldly, argues Clay Routledge, professor of psychology at North Dakota State University. According to Routledge, author of *Supernatural: Death, Meaning and the Power of the Invisible World*, an evolutionary need to decipher the random chaos of life and discover a greater meaning is a primal urge that resides within atheists and the religious. In one particularly interesting experiment, a group containing believers and atheists was asked to read out statements that implored God to punish them by, among other things, turning their friends against them. As they called on the Almighty to harm them, the amount of electrical current reaching their skin was measured – a method of gauging stimulation to fear stimuli. The atheists reacted in the same way as the faithful, showing that even though they didn't believe in an omnipotent creator, they still feared he could influence their lives. Other studies have found that atheists are more likely to believe in ghosts and UFOs. It seems that the supernatural has a hold on all of us.

Be it the death of a loved one or a bizarre event with no obvious cause, humans are hard-wired to seek meaning and comfort in a world that is often beyond our understanding

Image source: Getty; Alamy

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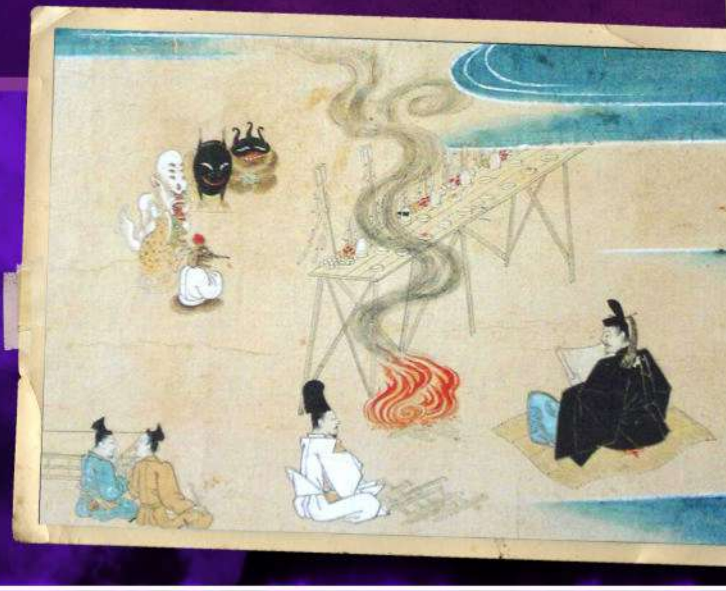


CLARISSIMVS MICHAEL NOSTRADAMVS

It's a miracle!

Miraculous events caused by the gods and holy people occur in many religions, but what they mean and why they happen has often sparked controversy

Written by Ben Gazur

Miracles are reported from religions around the world and have been interpreted in many ways according to various theological teachings

Miracles are hard to define, and most of us never encounter one in our daily lives. Occasionally we might exclaim "It's a miracle!" over some lucky happenstance but we tend not to really believe that the laws of nature have been suspended just to help us with some mundane task. Miracles in which some unexplained and supernatural phenomena occur are common to most world faiths and many believers do think that their favoured deity can work wonders.

Studies show that as many as 80% of Americans and 62% of British adults still believe in miracles today

SAINTS AND RELICS

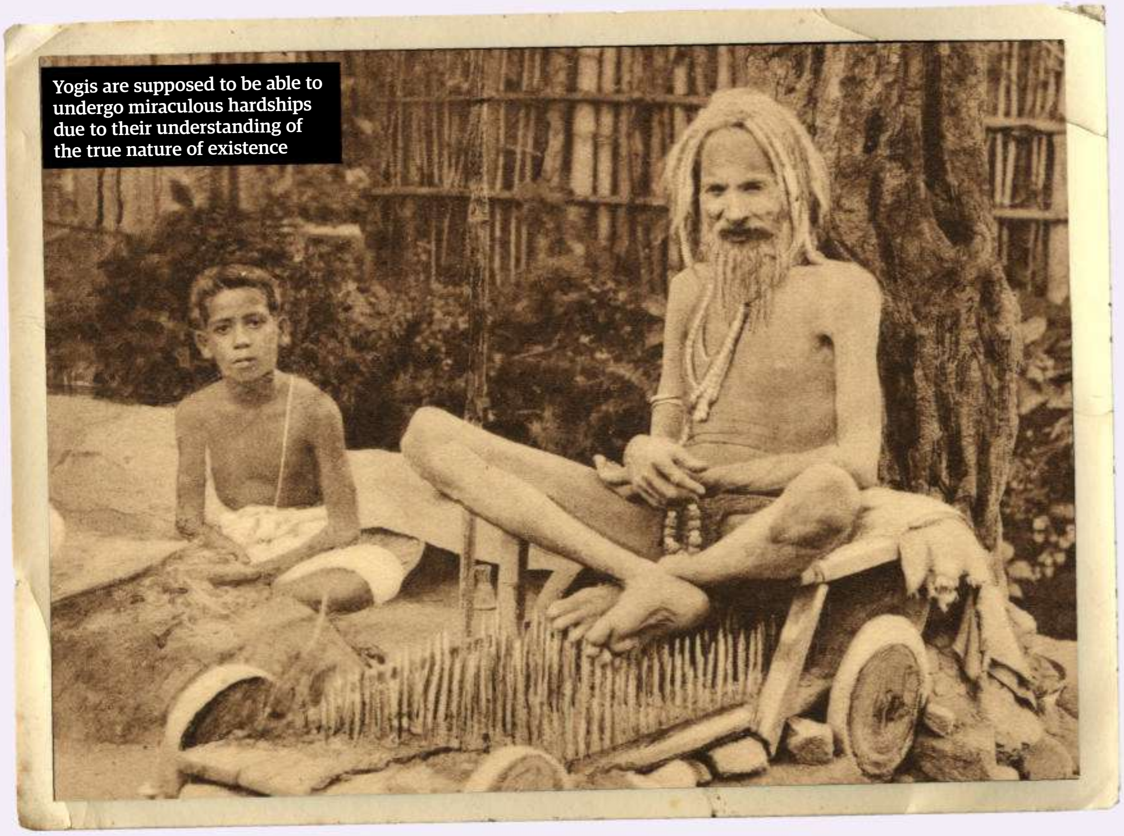
The Gospels of the Christian New Testament are full of miraculous events. Jesus is said to have cured the sick with words or a touch, raised the dead, turned water into wine, and finally conquered death when he rose from his own tomb. Jesus' closest followers, the apostles, were also granted access to some of these divine powers and miracles followed them as they spread their faith, and for the early Christians the idea of sainthood became inextricably linked to the idea of performing miracles.

From the 1st to the 4th centuries (CE) the pagan Roman Empire persecuted Christians and thousands were executed by civil authorities as martyrs for their faith. Many of these accounts of martyrdom included miraculous moments. When Polycarp of Smyrna was burned to death in 155 CE the flames are said to have blazed up into amazing shapes and spread a heavenly perfume. When the fire did not kill Polycarp the executioners stabbed him through the heart and a dove flew out as if carrying his soul to heaven. Other martyrs are said to have been thrown to wild beasts to die as entertainment for crowds but used prayer to tame the animals and survive the ordeal.

Some early Church Fathers were convinced that miracles had indeed happened at the time of Christianity's establishment but sought to lessen the tie between holiness and the miraculous. Saint Augustine, writing in the 5th century, said "These miracles were not allowed to last until our times lest the soul ever seek visible things and the human race grow cold because of familiarity with those things whose novelty enkindled it." Yet miracle tales remained popular with the masses of the faithful.

Once the chance for martyrdom became more limited with official recognition of Christianity as the state religion in many places, new ways of identifying saints had to be developed. Saints in medieval Europe were generally holy people around whom local cults developed. Stories of their sanctity and heroic acts were collected and scribed by monks, becoming one of the most widely consumed genres of tales.

Some miracles from the Middle Ages strike us as strange today, as when St Cuthbert called on otters to warm his feet, but the idea of divine help was dear to many people's hearts. By calling on



Yogis are supposed to be able to undergo miraculous hardships due to their understanding of the true nature of existence

Image source: Getty; Alamy

saints to intercede with God, Christians who could otherwise not hope for aid could believe that a miracle would be sent to them. With medicine at a rudimentary stage one of the most sought after miracles was to be supernaturally healed of an illness. Many living saints were said to have healing hands.

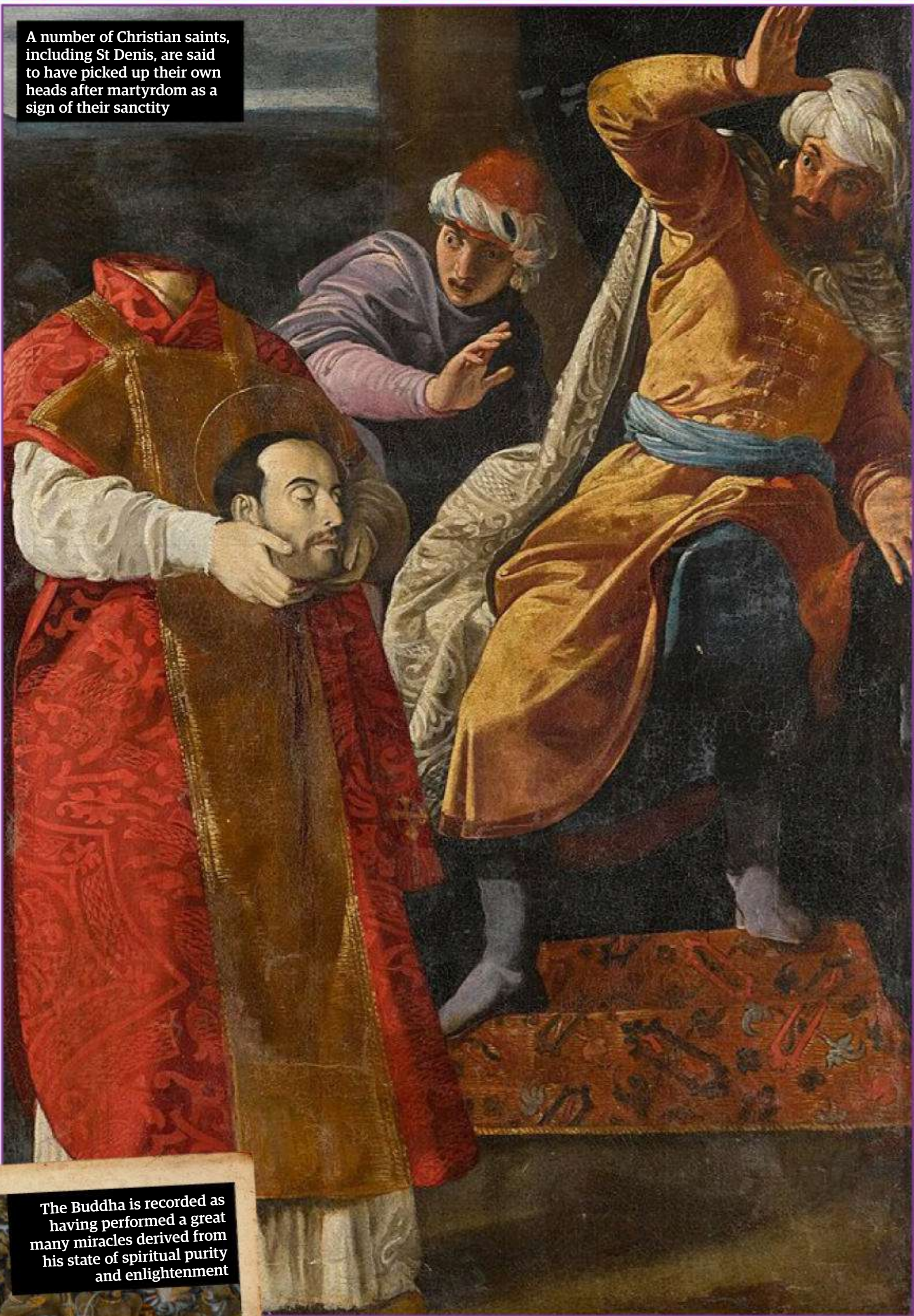
Saints also did not stop providing miracles once they had died. Once a saint was dead and in heaven they were thought to sit at God's side so prayers to saints were particularly effective. Even the relics of a saint, such as their body parts or belongings, could offer miracles. Shrines developed around churches which contained these relics. The shrines that could boast the most spectacular miracles enjoyed prosperity and fame as pilgrims travelled from far and wide. The blood of St Thomas Beckett was offered to pilgrims to Canterbury, in a well-diluted form, and was thought to offer cures for all ailments. The faithful were reminded however that it was not the saints who actually performed miracles, but God acting through them.

While miracles seem to have become less common in recent centuries, the Catholic Church still requires a holy person to perform two miracles after their death before they can be officially declared to be a saint.

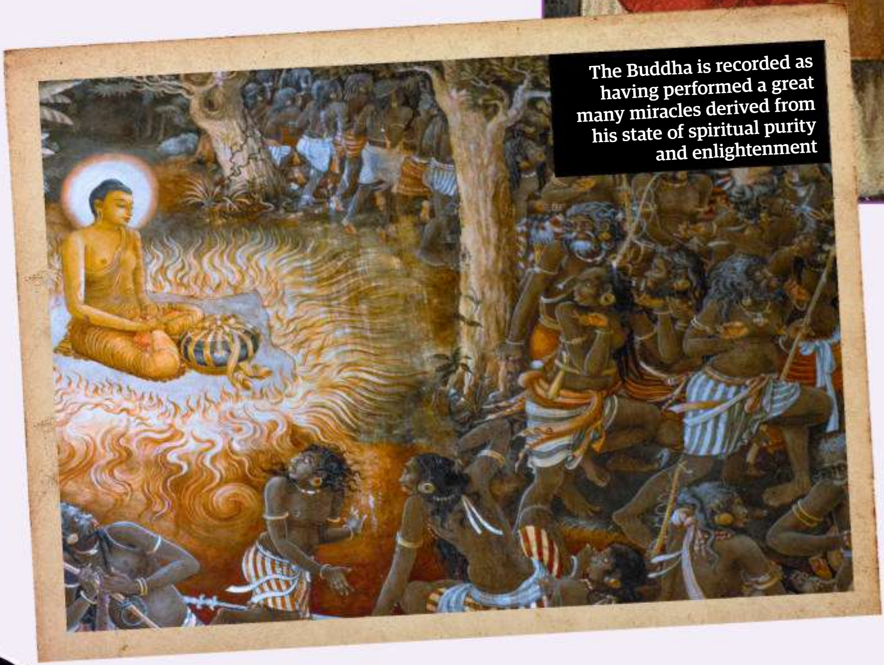
BODHISATTVAS

The Western concept of a miracle does not always translate perfectly when considering other religious traditions but most world religions have some concept of supernatural events emanating from the divine. In the long history of Buddhism, accounts of miracles have always formed part of the narrative of those who reach enlightenment.

The Buddha is said to have emerged from his mother and taken seven steps, a lotus flower springing into life at the site of each footstep.



A number of Christian saints, including St Denis, are said to have picked up their own heads after martyrdom as a sign of their sanctity



The Buddha is recorded as having performed a great many miracles derived from his state of spiritual purity and enlightenment

> "The Catholic Church still requires a holy person to perform two miracles after their death before they can be officially declared to be a saint"

Reliquaries containing the remains of Christian saints were often thought to grant miracles to those pilgrims who prayed before them

And, when he needed to cross the river Ganges the Buddha simply levitated over the water.

There are many different schools of Buddhism and each has different stories about the Buddha and his miraculous abilities, but there are commonalities: He could recollect all of his past lives and is said to have had the clairvoyant powers of telepathy and prophecy. Once while meditating he sensed that a woman was about to hang herself and a great light flew from his body and severed the rope.

Legend has it, the Buddha performed 'The Twin Miracle' to silence sceptics of his teaching. In front of doubters he built a jewelled walkway in the air and climbed it before settling into meditation. There he caused fire to erupt from his top half while water streamed from his lower half, before creating a spectacular display of light that lit the heavens. Finally, the Buddha constructed copies of himself which hung in the air.

Those who are on the path to enlightenment in Buddhism are known as Bodhisattvas and they are able to manifest many miraculous powers. Such individuals might be able to do any or all of the miracles associated with the Buddha or many more, but they often choose not to use them. Because Buddhist miracles spring from their proximity to enlightenment, Bodhisattvas will not tap into their power for egotistical means such as pride or a desire to impress others for they have advanced beyond the self.

The greatest miraculous ability of a Bodhisattva is the power to eliminate the poisons of the mind that hold one back from achieving enlightenment. Once their mind is detoxified, they have access to the iddhi - psychic powers - which includes levitation and invisibility.

GODS AND YOGIS

The literature and history of Hinduism is full of events which might be described as miraculous. There are many texts which form the scriptural basis for Hindu faith. Some deal with the actions of the gods, whose many deeds fall outside what most would consider the natural order and so can be considered miraculous. In one version of the creation story of the god Ganesha we are told that the infant Ganesha was beheaded by supreme deity Shiva, who lost Ganesha's human head and replaced it with that of an elephant.

Not all followers of Hinduism would subscribe to the notion of miracles, since by their definition they occur outside the laws of nature. For some believers describing something as a miracle merely demonstrates how little we understand when it comes to the divine order of the universe. Those who do see beyond our limited reality can manipulate it, often through meditative means, and to the rest of us, appear to exhibit extreme or supernatural physical or mental strength, such as laying on a bed of nails or abstaining from food for long periods.

According to Hinduism, all humans have this ability to manifest these powers. Yogis, people who, through a strict practice of ethics, rituals and meditation, have evolved and are able access to many powers. Known as siddhis, these include the ability to manipulate the physical world, manifest their desires and even levitate .

Stories of holy Hindus often include miracles which underline our failure to fathom the workings of the gods. Where human strength and wisdom end, another way may reveal itself. In one example, a wagon was too heavy for even elephants to pull, but a devout Hindu rested his head against it and prayed, causing the wagon to move on its own. In another account, a holy man chastised a person for taking too much pride in their knowledge of the sacred Vedas. He told them that anyone could recite these ancient scriptures and rested his hand on an ox - who promptly began chanting them.

THE END OF MIRACLES

It is a common joke that the age of miracles ended with the invention of the video camera. And while it is true that the majority of miracles happened in the past and can never be verified, millions of people still believe in the miraculous today. Mother Theresa became a Catholic saint in 2016 after she was credited with curing a man of multiple brain tumours in 2008. In 1995 many worshippers in India witnessed a miracle in which statues of the god Ganesha were said to have drank milk offered to them. Where there is faith, it seems, there will always be miracles.

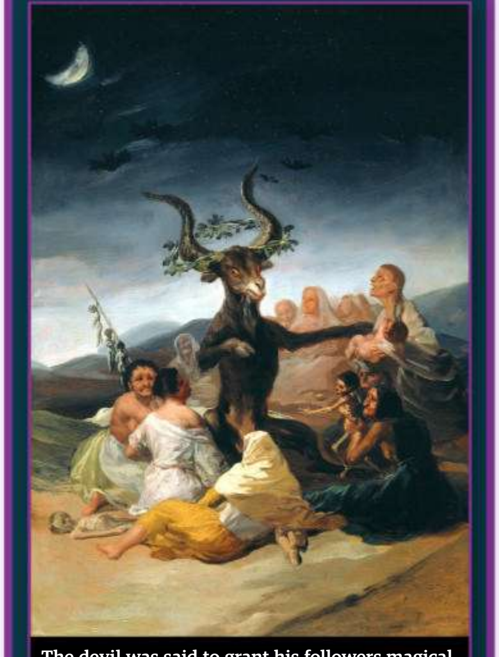
MIRACLES OF GOD OR DEVILS?

Early miracles were often difficult to differentiate from malicious magic

Miracles are a dangerous sign even for the faithful. The Buddha warned his followers not treat supernatural powers as a marker of holiness because they could be counterfeited by magic. The medieval Catholic Church spent a great deal of time investigating claims of miracles to see whether they were divine or were caused by demonic powers.

The biblical letter *The First Epistle to the Thessalonians* warns that when the Antichrist comes "He will come with great power, and he will do all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders." *The Gospel of Mark* says that many false prophets will appear who will show great powers and lead the faithful astray. How then were Catholic believers to judge true miracles from false ones?

The first step was to gather written witness accounts and question everyone involved in the potential miracle. Was it truly an event outside of the normal laws of nature? If it was the case that a single holy person was manifesting the miracles then they would be interrogated repeatedly to see if they held any heretical beliefs or were motivated by pride. Only once all possible sources of corruption had been investigated might the Church give their acknowledgement that a genuine miracle had occurred.



The devil was said to grant his followers magical powers, which made telling real and diabolical miracles apart important to Christians

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Mysterious miracles and magical events

Strange phenomena have always drawn crowds and history is replete with miracles that have been witnessed by many people

Written by Ben Gazur

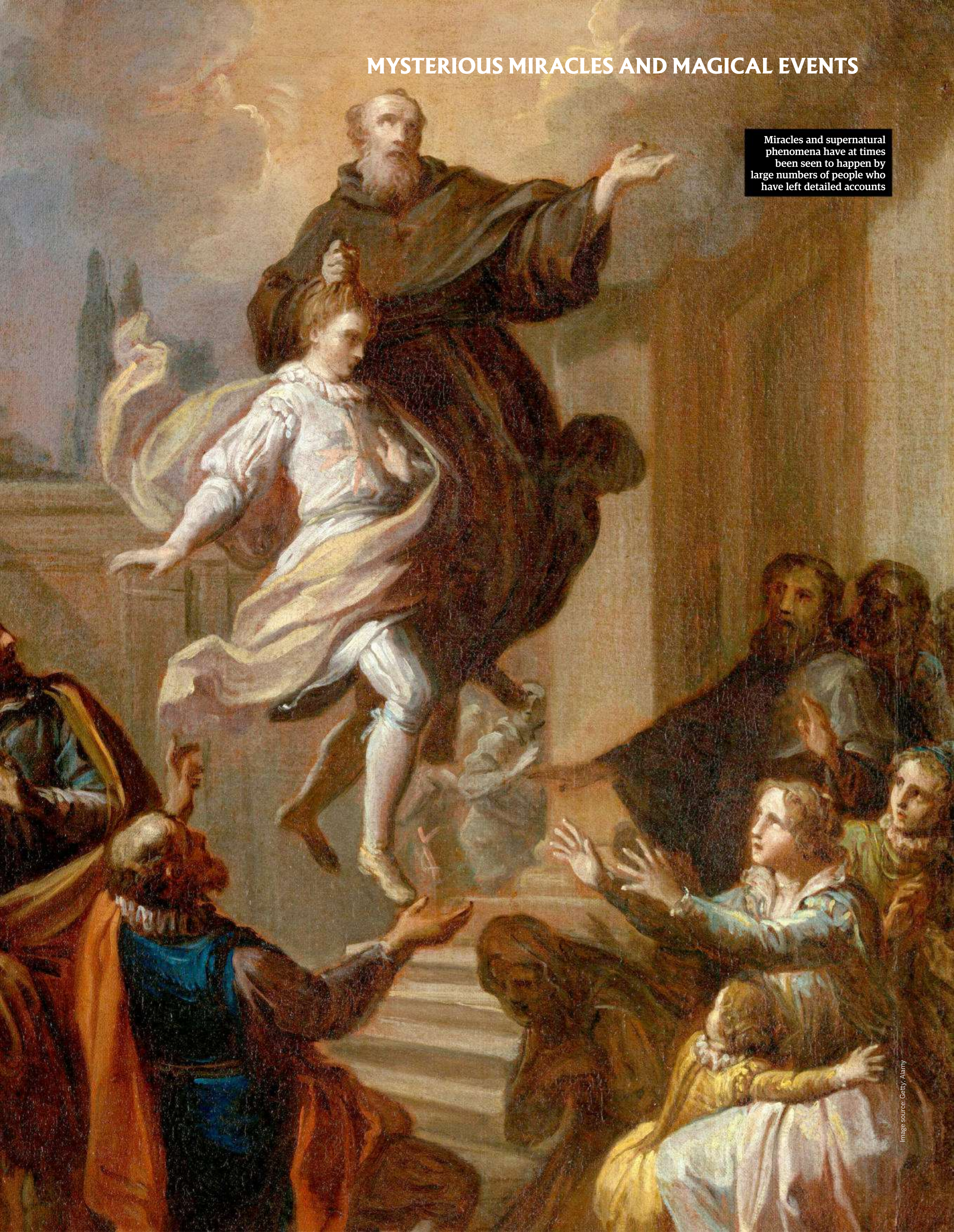
Miracles, by their supernatural nature, tend not to happen too often and they seldom appear to more than a few people at a time. Miracles and other paranormal events are those that defy our understanding of the natural order of the universe. Some attribute instances in which the laws of nature are suspended to the actions of gods, or angels, or demons, or other unspecified spirits. All we can know of them is what witnesses report to us.

Because most miracles occur in isolation and to just a handful of people, much room is left for sceptics to doubt whether they even happened at all. It is easy to dismiss one person's account of a strange event as unreliable, confused, or lying. But what are we to make of occasions in which hundreds or thousands of people fervently believe they have experienced a miracle? Was the entire crowd deluded, or does it suggest that our rational understanding of nature is somehow incomplete?

All that can be said with certainty about miracles and supernatural events is that they have been recorded for almost all of human history. Ancient Mesopotamian clay tablets tell us about the demons who could cause illness and how to drive them out. Of course, in times where there was a lack of scientific understanding of the natural world there was more scope for even mundane events to be interpreted as miraculous.

Miracles deserve to be studied because they offer glimpses into possibilities that would otherwise be discarded as fanciful. They also help us to understand ourselves because people who claim to witness miracles genuinely believe in what they have experienced. Here are ten extraordinary moments from history where many people witnessed strange and miraculous events.

> *"Because most miracles occur in isolation and to just a handful of people, much room is left for sceptics to doubt whether they even happened at all"*



Miracles and supernatural phenomena have at times been seen to happen by large numbers of people who have left detailed accounts

Image source: Getty; Alamy

The milk miracle

Could a man-made statue of Ganesha have somehow been posessed by the god himself?

In 1995 a worshipper at a Hindu temple in New Delhi made an offering of milk to a statue of the god Ganesha. Holding a spoonful of liquid up to the trunk of the deity they were amazed to witness the spoon emptying as the god apparently drunk the milk. Word of this miracle spread quickly among the faithful and all across India, and soon the world, Hindu worshippers were rushing to temples to see if the miracle would happen again. One priest remembered being awoken in the middle of the night by a neighbour who begged for the doors of a temple to be unlocked so that he could witness the miracle for himself.

21 September of that year has been called 'the day India stopped' because so many people travelled to temples that traffic came to a standstill in many places. People in temples as far apart as London and North America reported witnessing exactly the same phenomena, and not only with statues of Ganesha. Sales of milk in India skyrocketed as people bought up supplies to offer to their gods while some canny entrepreneurs started charging five times the normal price for milk. It is thought that millions of people saw, or thought they saw, statues of Ganesha drinking milk.

Because of the widespread reports of this miracle researchers from the Indian government were called in to investigate and they soon found a likely explanation for the miracle. The stone used in many of the statues was naturally porous and so able to draw the milk from a spoon through capillary action, which allowed the liquid to flow down the statue in a thin film. Milk with food dye added made this more obvious.

Neither of these scientific accounts deterred the most devout Hindus from being convinced that they had witnessed genuine miracles. The day, which took on the nature of a festival, is still recalled fondly by many.

Offerings of food and drink are common to statues of Ganesha but before 1995 few had ever seen the god consume them

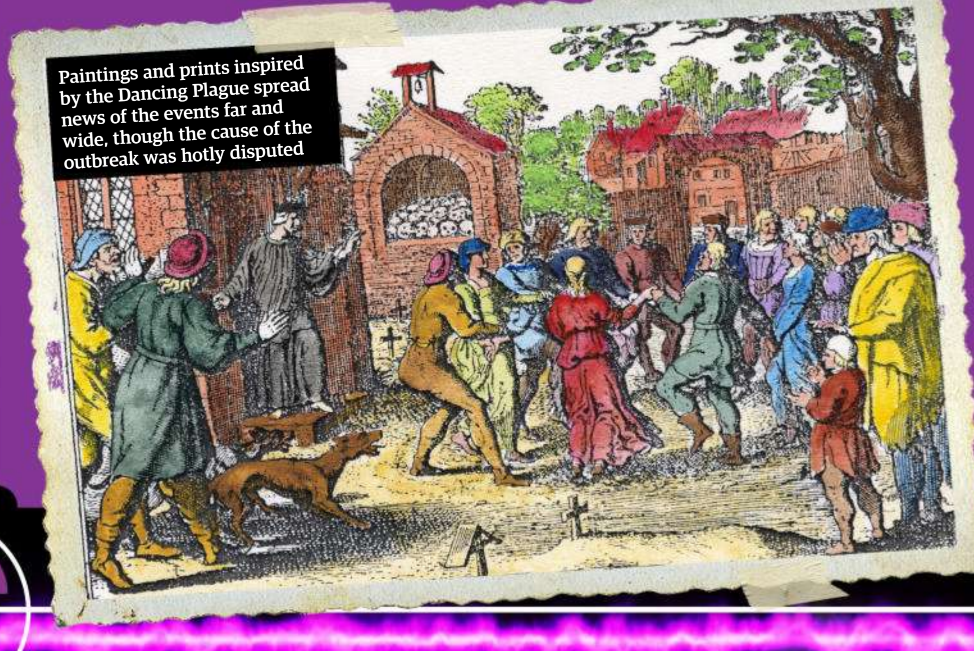
The Dancing Plague

Was this curious affliction a case of mass hysteria or the work of the devil?

Throughout medieval Europe, beginning as early as the 7th century, there were reports of people being suddenly struck with the overwhelming urge to dance, unable to stop until they collapsed in exhaustion. It was thought the victims were either possessed by demons or struck by divine judgement.

In 1518 a woman in Strasbourg suddenly began to dance frantically in the street. As she continued to dance for days she was joined first by dozens and then hundreds of others, all jigging compulsively. The city banned all music to stop the risk of others falling under the curse but nothing stopped the dancers except extreme fatigue. It seemed the only cure was to invoke the aid of St Vitus and undergo a blessing at a nearby shrine.

After two months, and as mysteriously as it started, the plague of dancing mania ceased. Multiple chronicles written at the time recorded the mass dancers, and researchers have struggled to explain the events of that summer ever since.



Paintings and prints inspired by the Dancing Plague spread news of the events far and wide, though the cause of the outbreak was hotly disputed

Saints of the air

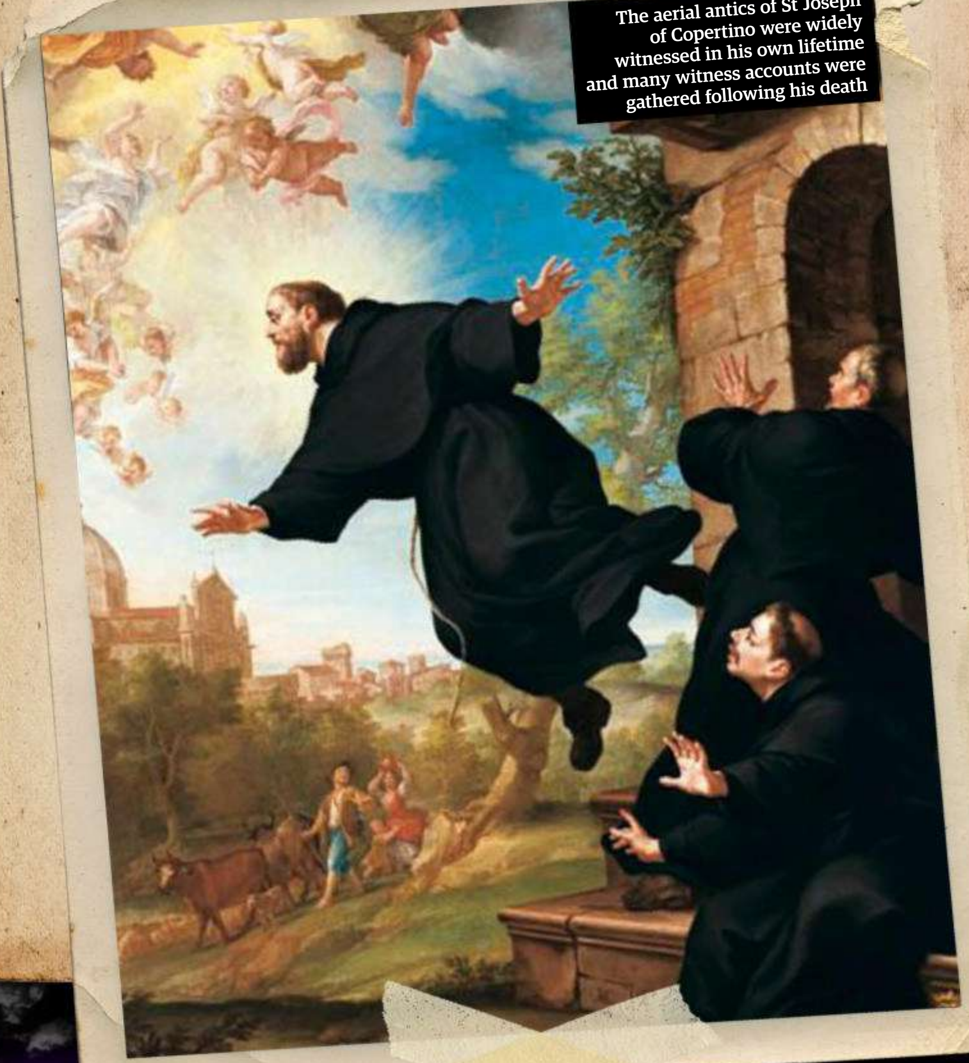
Instances of humans with the ability to levitate, or even fly, have occured throughout history

Humans tend not to be able to travel through the air without help. If they do it is usually a quick 'flight' in a downwards trajectory, until they hit the ground. Yet there have been numerous cases of humans flying under their own volition witnessed by multiple people throughout history.

Joseph of Copertino was a 17th century friar who, from the age of 27, often fell into states of religious ecstasy during which he would levitate. A close friend and contemporary of Joseph recorded 70 instances in which he took flight, but said many more had occurred over a 35 year period. One of these happened while Joseph was taking part in procession and his levitation was seen by the entire crowd as he hovered in the air for some time. On another occasion Joseph entered into a rapture while in church and danced in the air above the altar for 15 minutes.

The Catholic Church at the time investigated Joseph three times but found nothing to charge him with. A number of other Christian saints have been said to have exhibited the ability to levitate, such as Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, but none were witnessed by so many people over such a long time.

In 1936 the Hindu yogi Subbayah Pullavar was photographed levitating in a horizontal position in front of a crowd of 150 and he remained in that position for approximately five minutes before being lowered to the ground. Sceptics might point to the fact that he rested his hand on a stick throughout the levitation or that a tent covered the yogi at the beginning and end of his act. However, a number of practitioners of meditation have claimed to hover above the ground while in a state of extreme focus.



The aerial antics of St Joseph of Copertino were widely witnessed in his own lifetime and many witness accounts were gathered following his death

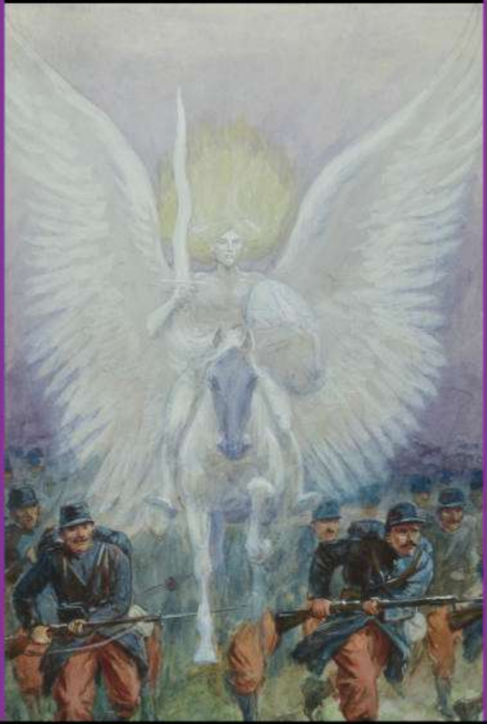
The Angels of Mons

Did a miraculous army come to the aid of the British during WWI?

The First World War was a brutally bloody and traumatic conflict for all who took part. All sides called on God's divine assistance to help them to victory but in one case it was reported that the forces of heaven had actually taken part in a battle. After the Battle of Mons in 1914 rumours began to fly about a spectral army who had come to the aid of the British and led to a crushing German defeat.

Various accounts were told of strange lights appearing in the sky. Some said that these took the form of ghostly longbowmen led by St George, the patron saint of England, or angels armed with swords who stood between the opposing forces and protected the British. The miracle of the Angels of Mons became a morale boosting propaganda victory.

The writer Arthur Machen had published a fictional story with similar supernatural events just before tales of this miracle spread, but many insisted the angels had really appeared.



Many believed in the miraculous appearance of a divine army at Mons despite claims that it had been a fictional invention

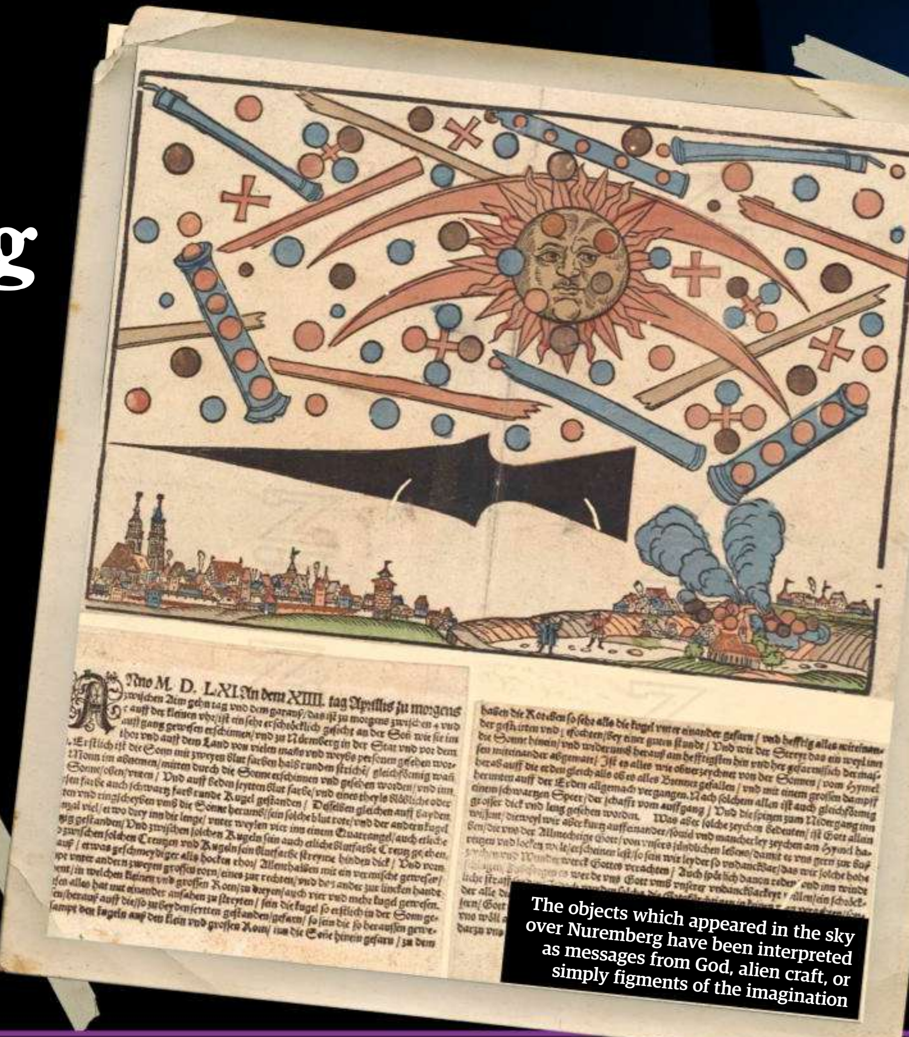
Image source: Getty; Alamy

The celestial phenomena over Nuremberg

Were these early UFOs extraterrestrial, divine or simply astrological?

In 1561 a printer produced a news article with a most startling illustration. The woodcut shows the face of the sun covered in circles with bright shapes whizzing around it in a confusing dance. The text underneath describes how on the morning of 14 April the residents of Nuremberg witnessed a bizarre battle in the sky. Globes, spear-shaped objects, and other odd things appeared in the heavens and seemed to fight each other. The report tells us that "the globes flew back and forth among themselves and fought vehemently with each other for over an hour." Several of the globes were knocked down and crashed surrounded by smoke.

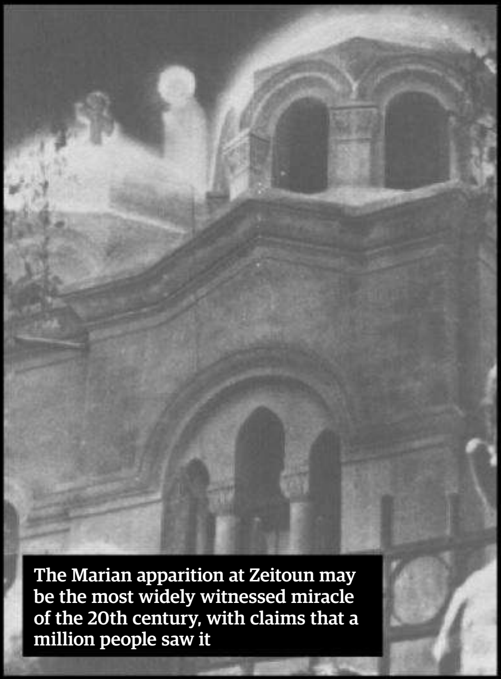
This was not the last aerial battle witnessed in Europe. In 1566 spheres of red and black were said to have fought above the city of Basel. Believers in alien UFOs have pointed to these events as extraterrestrial visitations, though such miraculous tales were a popular genre at the time.



The objects which appeared in the sky over Nuremberg have been interpreted as messages from God, alien craft, or simply figments of the imagination

Our Lady of Zeitoun

Was this mysterious phantom a ghost or a holy visitation?



The Marian apparition at Zeitoun may be the most widely witnessed miracle of the 20th century, with claims that a million people saw it

Over a period of three years from 1968 there were reports of the Virgin Mary appearing on a church in Zeitoun, Cairo. The visitation began when two Muslim workers saw what they thought was a nun in white on the roof of the church and called out for someone to help her. Another person present claimed the figure could be the Virgin Mary. After a few minutes the figure seemed to fade and disappear. In the following months thousands claimed to have witnessed the apparition at different times.

As news of the miracle spread envoys were sent to the church by both Coptic and Catholic authorities. Both sets of envoys claimed to have seen the Virgin appear themselves and the Coptic church declared that this was a genuine apparition of Jesus' mother. Several photographs were taken at the time which purport to show the figure, which appears as a being of light. It is said that local police searched rooftops near to the church but were unable to locate any devices which could have been projecting an image onto the church.

One witness said that the figure appeared as brightly as a million suns. A Coptic bishop said of his experience of the phenomenon: "There she was, five or six metres above the dome, high in the sky, full figure, like a phosphorous statue, but not so stiff as a statue."

While many faithful witnesses claimed to distinctly see the figure of the Virgin, a visiting professor of anthropology who observed the phenomenon saw only a few flashes of light, or an indistinct glow. The source of the light was not determined. The appearances of the Virgin ceased at the site in 1971 and seem not to have reoccurred in the years since.

A number of the photographs of the miracle appear to have been created for sale as mementoes to visitors, though believers insist that at least some of them are genuine.

The Naga Fireballs

What causes this annual mystical phenomenon is yet to be fully understood

Each year in October thousands of people gather along the Mekong river where it borders Thailand and Laos to witness glowing balls of light rise from the waters and float hundreds of feet in the air. Some of these orbs are no larger than marbles but some are said to be much larger.

According to legend these lights are fireballs released by the nagas, mythological serpent beings, who live in the depths of the river. As they wake up to celebrate the end of the Buddhist retreat period known as Vassa, the nagas shoot the fireballs into the air. Many people claim to have witnessed this event over the years and several, admittedly blurry, photographs appear to show the strange phenomena.

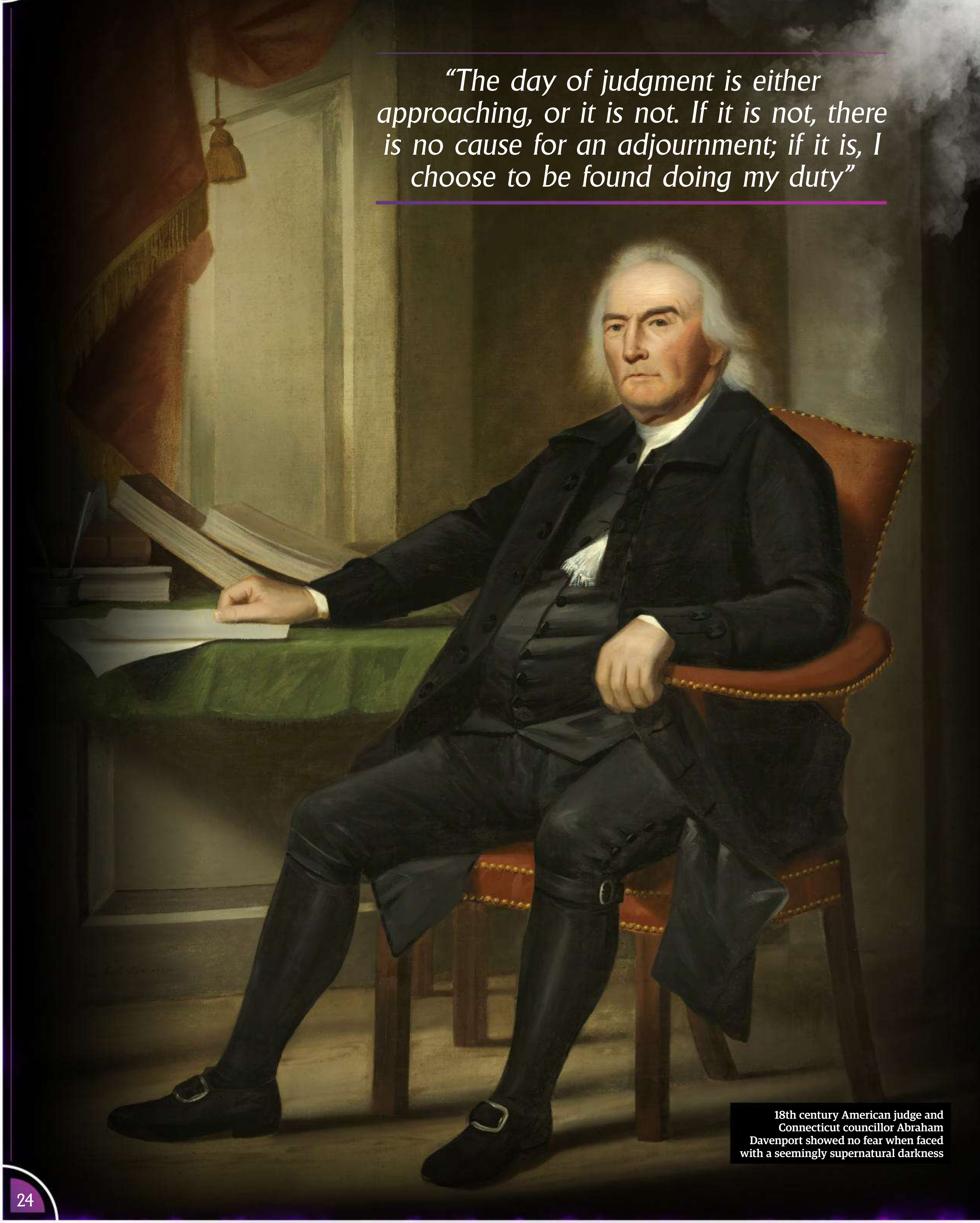
Skeptics remain unconvinced and various explanations have been put forward to explain what is witnessed. These range from ball lightning, to flammable gasses released by the river igniting, to gunfire.

Locals and tourists flock to the Mekong in hopes of seeing the mysterious Naga fireballs being released into the sky

> *"According to legend these lights are fireballs released by the nagas, mythological serpent beings"*

Image source: Getty; Alamy

“The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty”



18th century American judge and Connecticut councillor Abraham Davenport showed no fear when faced with a seemingly supernatural darkness

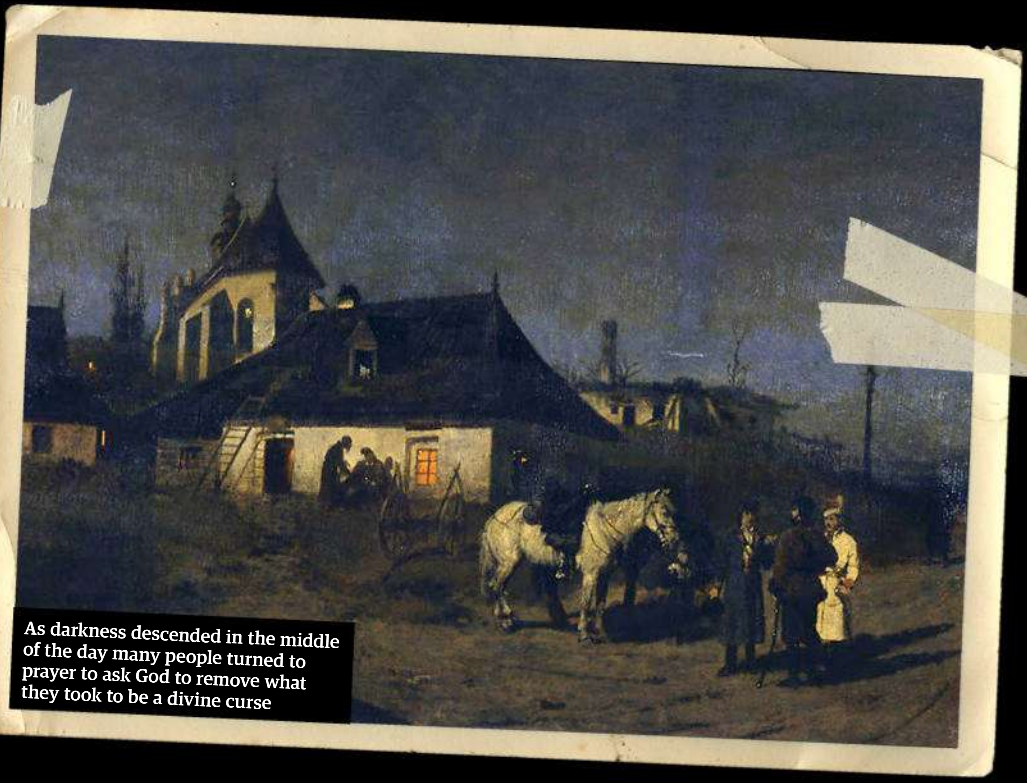
Dark day of New England

What caused the sun to seemingly switch off one early spring morning?

On 19 of May 1780, the skies over a large portion of New England, North America, descended into darkness. Between 10am and 12pm the sky grew gloomier and gloomier until people were forced to light candles to be able to see. Farm animals retreated to their pens as if night had really fallen and nocturnal animals emerged. Large crowds travelled to their churches to seek salvation from what some thought was a clear sign of the coming apocalypse.

In Connecticut it was suggested that a government meeting should be abandoned on account of the End of Days. Abraham Davenport rebuffed this suggestion by saying “The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.”

It is now thought that smoke from large forest fires mixed with the clouds to produce the seemingly supernatural darkness.



As darkness descended in the middle of the day many people turned to prayer to ask God to remove what they took to be a divine curse

Two places at once

How can a single person appear in more than one location at the same time?

For thousands of years certain people have been reported to have the ability to be in two different places at the same time – an attribute known as bilocation. The philosopher Pythagoras was said to have had this ability and later Christian saints like Anthony of Padua and Francis Xavier were witnessed performing the feat too. Hindu and Buddhist monks have been seen bilocating as a product of their meditation. Bilocation in the 17th century was used as evidence against those accused of witchcraft.

The guiding ocean lights

Are Te Lapa divine lights leading sailors safely to the shore?

Polynesian sailors were skilled at navigating the great distances between their islands and for hundreds of years relied on strange lights known as Te Lapa. According to locals these are like lightning flashes in the sea which radiate from land and can be seen over 100 miles from shore. By following the light, sailors were able to locate safe routes to travel. No conclusive scientific explanation for these widely seen lights has ever been produced.

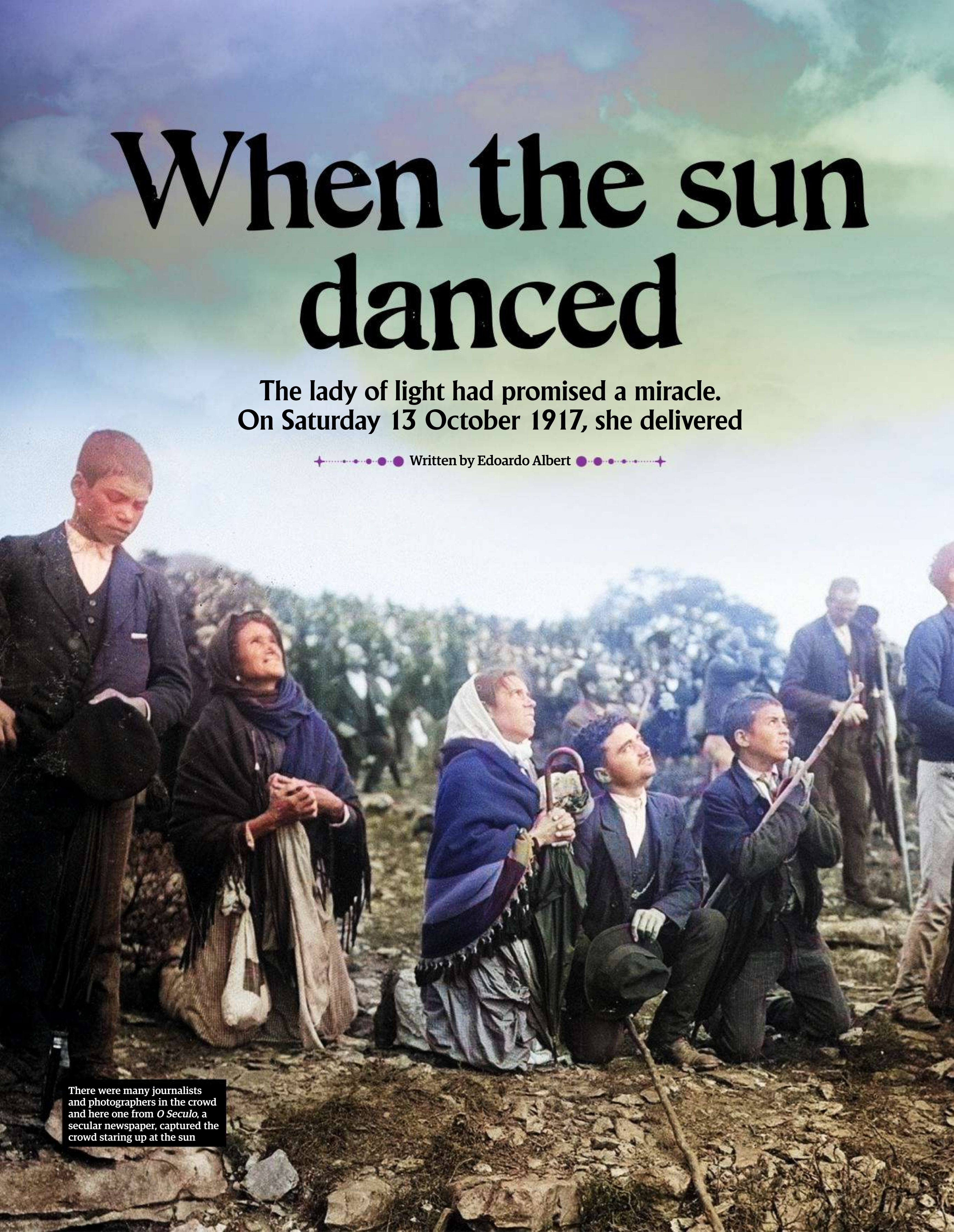
Strange lights at sea can occur from biological sources, such as this bioluminescence, but seem unlikely to cause the Te Lapa lights

Image source: Getty; Alamy

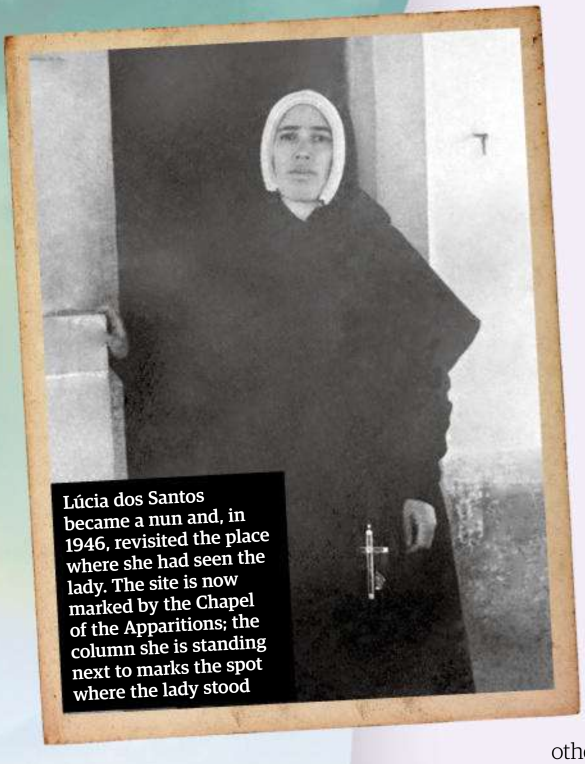
When the sun danced

The lady of light had promised a miracle.
On Saturday 13 October 1917, she delivered

Written by Edoardo Albert



There were many journalists and photographers in the crowd and here one from *O Seculo*, a secular newspaper, captured the crowd staring up at the sun



Lúcia dos Santos became a nun and, in 1946, revisited the place where she had seen the lady. The site is now marked by the Chapel of the Apparitions; the column she is standing next to marks the spot where the lady stood

Some 70,000 people were standing in a field in Portugal staring up at the sky. It was around 2pm on 13 October 1917, a Saturday. All these people had come to Fàtima, a city in the centre of Portugal, because of reports in the newspapers that something miraculous would happen. Curiosity, piety and scepticism had drawn the crowds, some hoping to have their faith confirmed, others ready to mock when nothing happened.

Portugal had become a republic in 1910. The new government was intensely anti-clerical, passing a series of laws designed to break Catholic influence on the country. Religious orders were expelled, feasts banned and about 2,000 priests and other clergy killed. Secular newspapers pumped out anti-Catholic stories.

One of the stories they covered was the rumour that three young children, Lúcia dos Santos (9) and her cousins Francisco (8) and Jacinta Marto (6), had seen apparitions of the Virgin Mary while minding the family's sheep in a field called Cova da Iria on the outskirts of Fàtima. They claimed to have first seen a luminous lady, holding a rosary, standing above a tree in the field. She told the children that she was from heaven and promised to return.

News of these visitations spread, particularly when the lady told the children that she would return on 13 October 1917 when she would give a sign that everyone could see. The children came under intense pressure during this time as the messages they relayed from the lady were seen as anti-government – they were even imprisoned for a while.

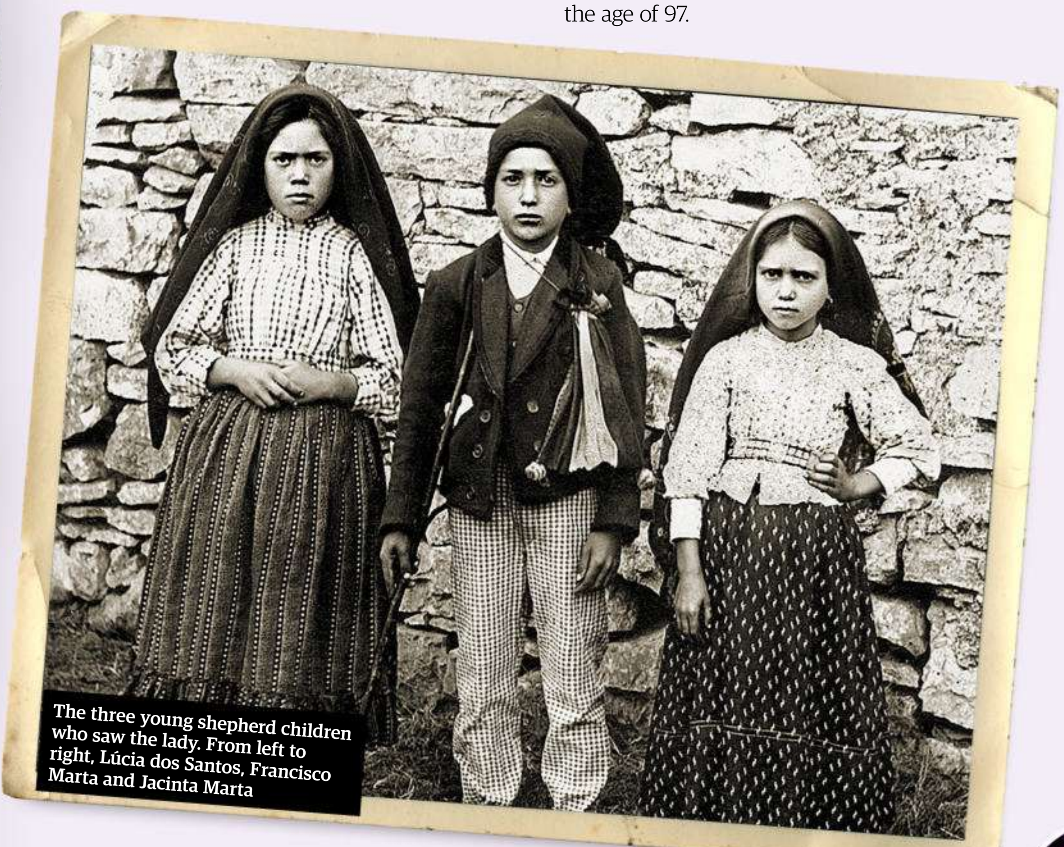
So when 13 October arrived, tens of thousands of people arrived in Fàtima, including many reporters from newspapers intensely hostile to this outbreak of religious fervour.

It had rained heavily overnight and in the morning; the ground was wet and muddy, while the sky remained overcast. The children duly saw visions of the lady, as well as of others, but they alone saw these figures: nothing there to bother sceptical onlookers, just children sharing some sort of dream.

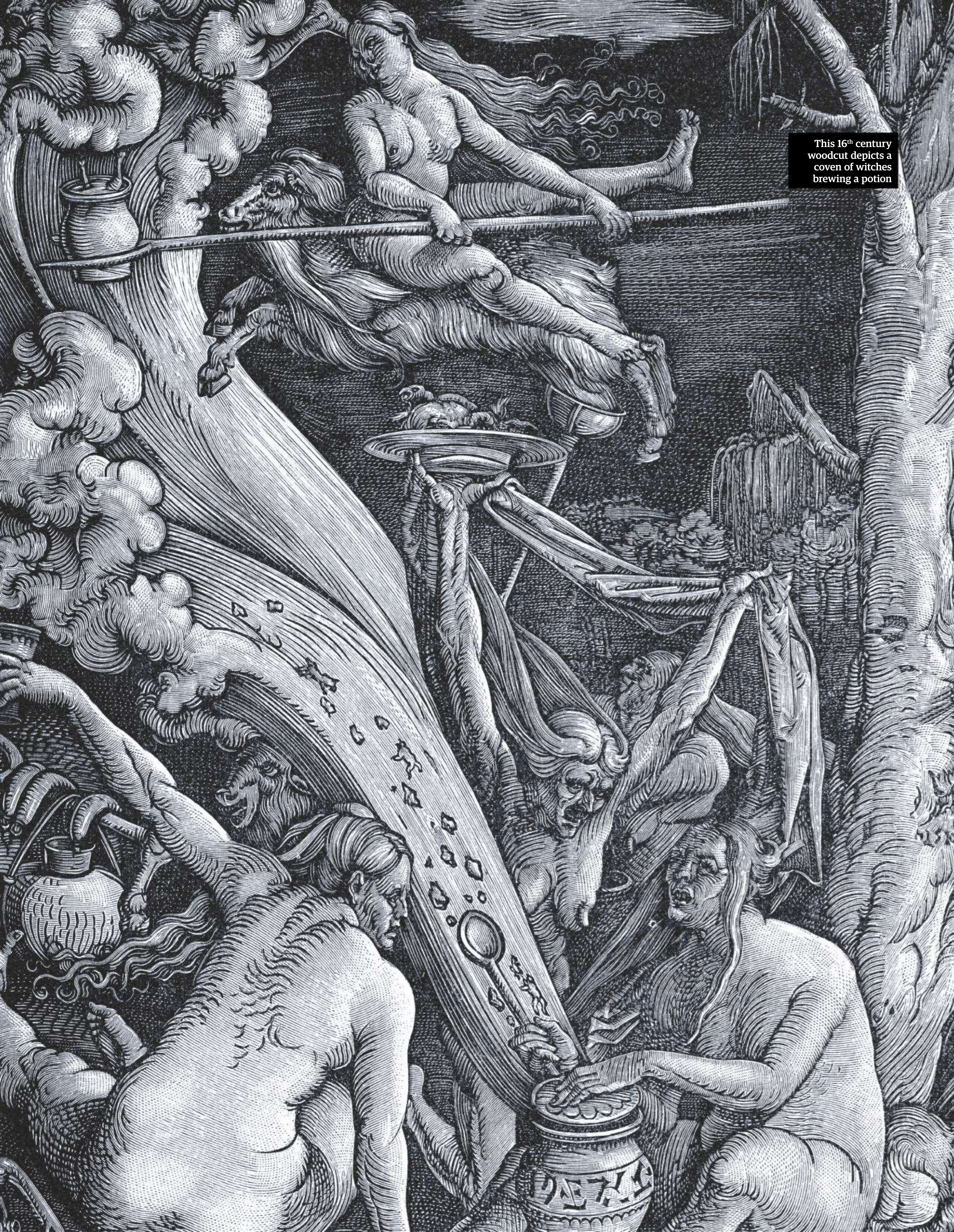
But then, something did happen. First, the ground dried as did the clothes of the waiting crowd. Then, a cry went up, "The sun, the sun!" The crowd turned to look.

Where normally the sun after rain would be eye-squintingly bright, now people could look at it straight. It seemed to spin in the sky, turning into a disc the colour of pearl, before casting strange, coloured light across the assembled crowd and landscape. Then the sun seemed to fall towards the watching crowd, causing many to cry out, before climbing back into the sky via a zig-zag route.

This was the Miracle of the Sun. Accounts appeared quickly in the Portuguese press. In the medium term, the apparitions at Fàtima led to a renewal of Catholicism in Portugal. But two of the three children did not live to see this. Francisco and Jacinta both died in the Spanish flu pandemic that followed the end of World War I. Only Lúcia survived, becoming a nun and dying in 2005 at the age of 97.



The three young shepherd children who saw the lady. From left to right, Lúcia dos Santos, Francisco Marta and Jacinta Marta



This 16th century woodcut depicts a coven of witches brewing a potion

Witches, wizards, sorcerers and spellcasters

From talking to spirits to predicting the future, these mystical figures were a supernatural force to be reckoned with

Written by Bee Ginger

Witchcraft. It's a word laden with sinister connotations, conjuring images of incantations and strange entities, bubbling broths and whispered curses. It's also something that most of us in the modern age have confined to the past, a superstitious practice to be summoned to the silver screen every once in a while in the name of horror, or studied by curious academics in dusty libraries. But witches and wizards have not always been viewed as bizarre relics of a bygone age.

For many thousands of years, the powers of a person capable of wielding magic were both feared and respected. From seers who could predict the future to masters of the dark arts, people of all creeds and faiths across the world believed that such supernatural figures could influence the lives of mortal souls - for both good and ill ends. The wisdom of these enchanters was eagerly sought, their wrath devoutly avoided. In some places, the existence of magic and otherwordly forces are still considered a natural part of life.

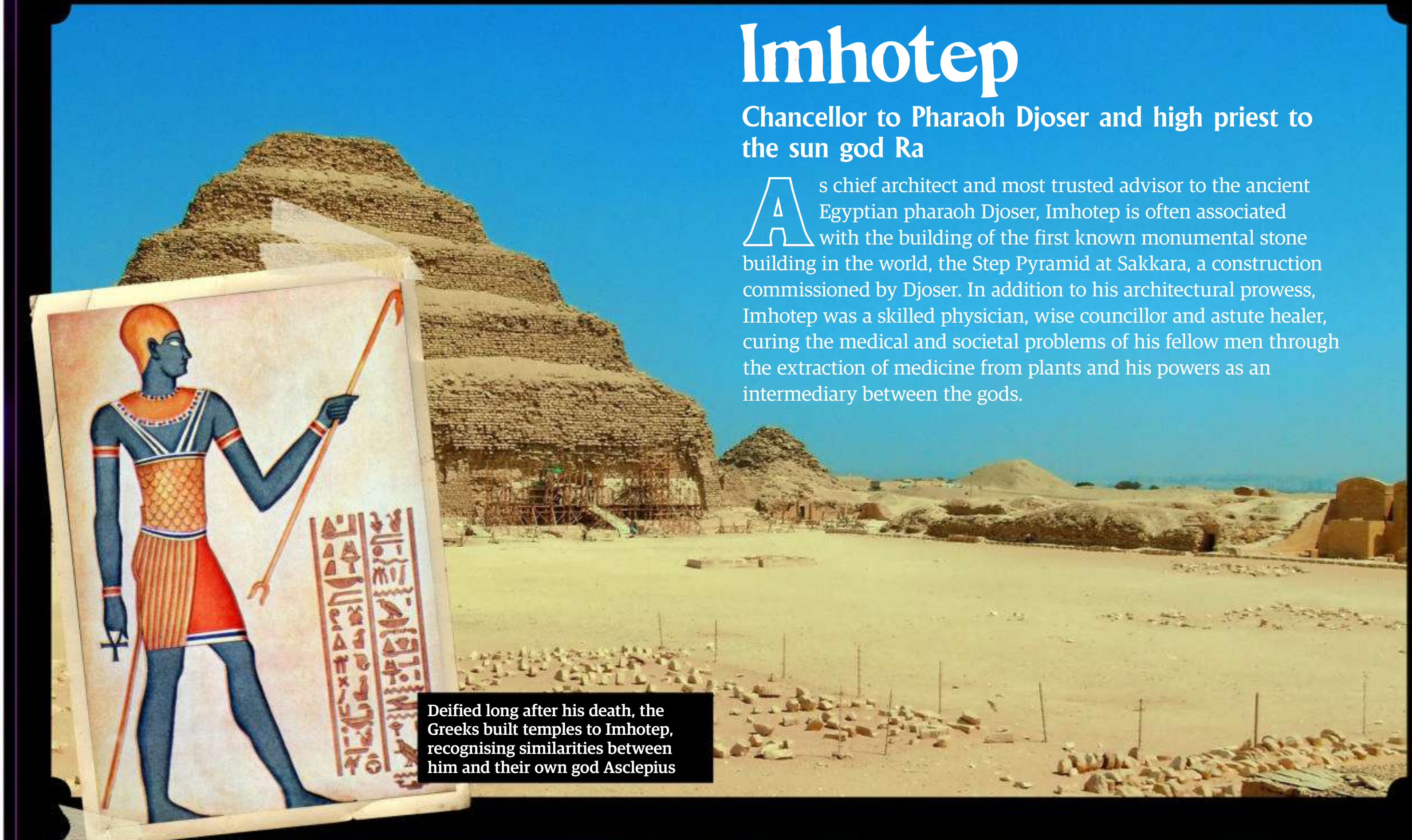
While the names of many potent practitioners are lost to time, some etched themselves into the history books, such as Merlin, spawn of a demon and mentor to the fabled King Arthur, or the Greek goddess Circe, who could turn her foes into animals. Stories charting the mysterious ways of these mythological beings abound, and they have in time inspired writers as esteemed as Shakespeare and Tolkien to create their own fictional versions. But witches and wizards aren't just the stuff of legend, and they certainly didn't all ride broomsticks and hunch over boiling cauldrons brimming with potions. As you are about to discover, some sorcerers were all too real.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Imhotep

Chancellor to Pharaoh Djoser and high priest to the sun god Ra

As chief architect and most trusted advisor to the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Djoser, Imhotep is often associated with the building of the first known monumental stone building in the world, the Step Pyramid at Sakkara, a construction commissioned by Djoser. In addition to his architectural prowess, Imhotep was a skilled physician, wise councillor and astute healer, curing the medical and societal problems of his fellow men through the extraction of medicine from plants and his powers as an intermediary between the gods.



Deified long after his death, the Greeks built temples to Imhotep, recognising similarities between him and their own god Asclepius

Edward Kelley

The controversial character who aided the infamous alchemist John Dee

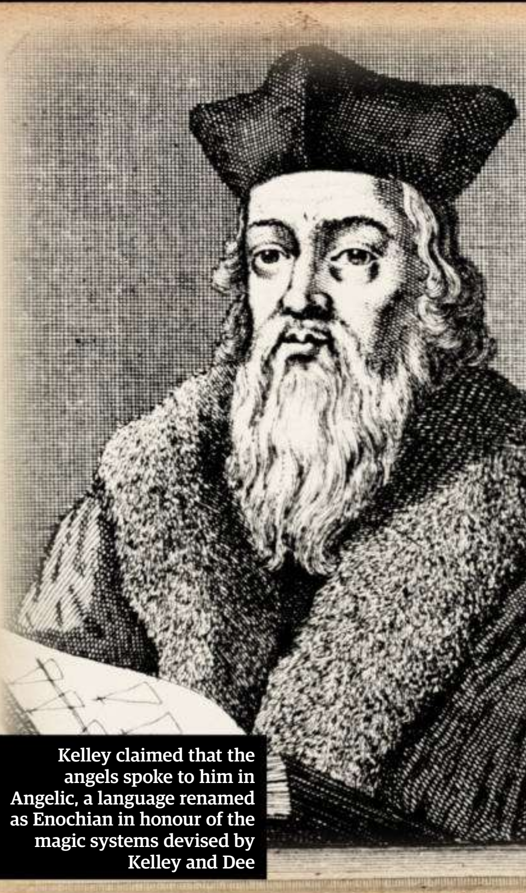
Communicating with the heavens is no mean feat, so it's little wonder that when Edward Kelley, a scryer (fortune-teller) from Worcester, presented royal astronomer John Dee with a magic mirror through which one could see angels, Queen Elizabeth's advisor was keen to hear more. The year was 1582, and Dee's previous attempts to uncover the secrets of the spirit realm had consistently been frustrated. Now here was a man (Kelley also went by the surname Talbot) who claimed he could speak to the otherworld.

Known for wearing a cap to hide the fact his ears had been cropped as a punishment for forgery, Kelley spent the next seven years working alongside Dee to summon spirits in the hope of interpreting their wisdom and thereby learning of new lands that the English were yet to discover.

The pair travelled into Europe and attempted to gain the favour of Emperor Rudolf II of the Holy Roman Empire. They failed to do so, despite Kelley's claims that a spiritual creature led him to a red powder that could transform base metals into gold – the ultimate aim of alchemy.

Kelley and Dee's relationship was, at times, volatile and by 1589 they had gone their separate ways – but not before Dee agreed to share wives with his colleague after Kelley assured him that the angels wanted them to exchange spouses.

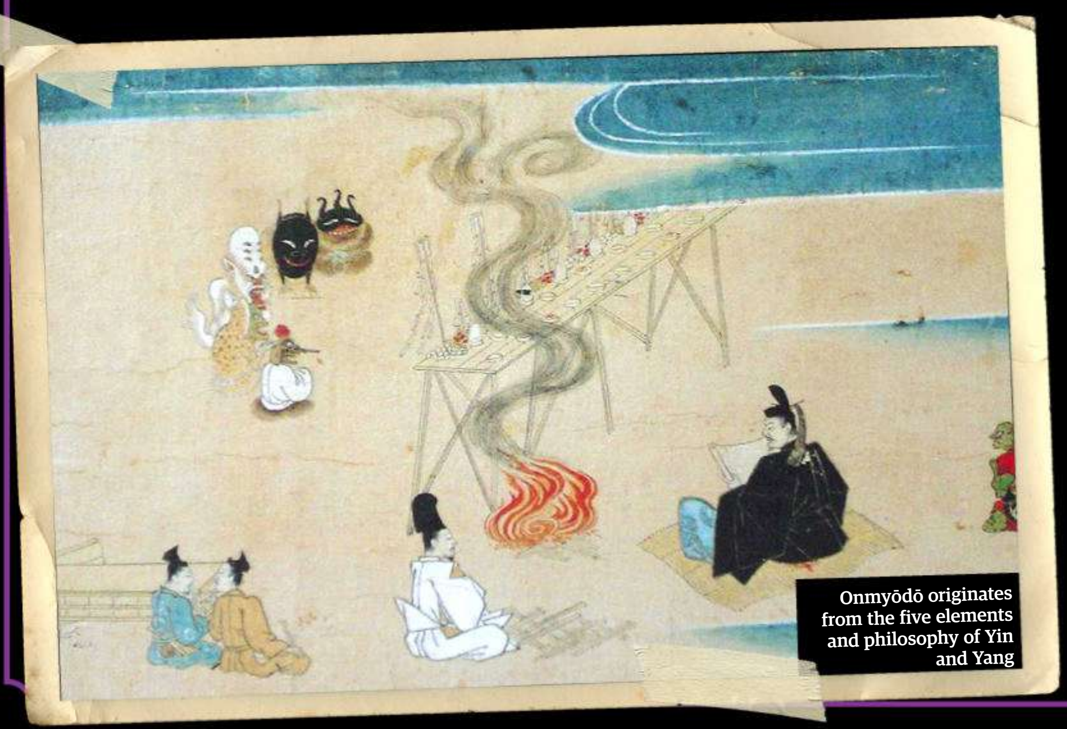
Kelley eventually succeeded in convincing Rudolf of his alchemical prowess, securing himself a lucrative position in the Emperor's court. But his luck was not to last. Having already been temporarily imprisoned in 1591 for failing to conjure any gold, he was sentenced to further incarceration a few years later after apparently killing a man in a duel. Accounts vary, but he either died in prison from injuries sustained when he tried to escape, or he poisoned himself. Either way, Kelley's tumultuous life ended in Germany sometime in 1597 or 1598.



Kelley claimed that the angels spoke to him in Angelic, a language renamed as Enochian in honour of the magic systems devised by Kelley and Dee

Abe no Seimei

Japan's legendary magician was allegedly not entirely human



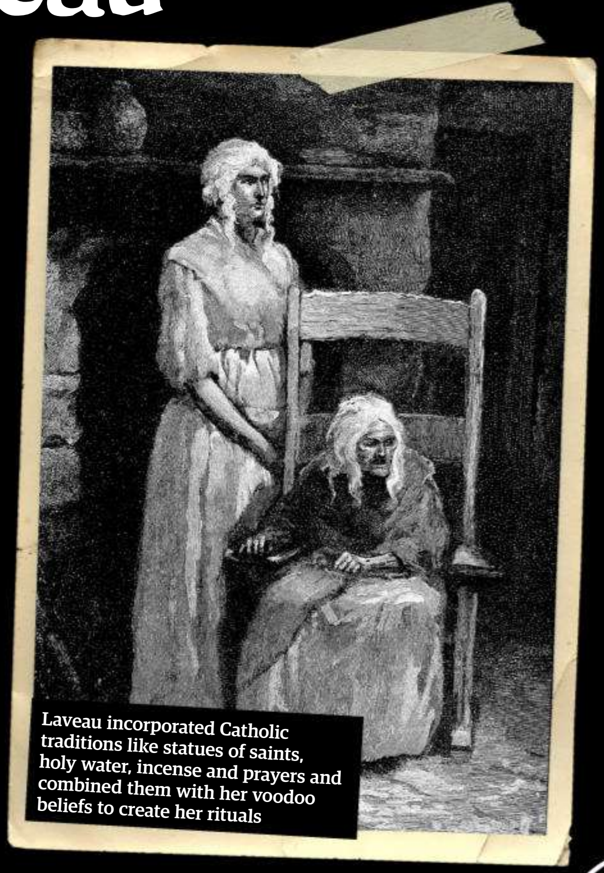
Onmyōdō originates from the five elements and philosophy of Yin and Yang

There is little mystery surrounding Abe no Seimei and his magical existence. The history books teach us that he served as an astrologer and onmyoji (a practitioner of onmyōdō, a technique that uses calendars and knowledge of astronomy to determine good fortune) for six Japanese emperors and the imperial court during the Heian period. His tasks included overseeing matters of divination, banishing illness and evil spirits with rituals and using numerous supernatural powers to protect and advise. Said to have possessed a second sight that enabled him to identify bad spirits and demons, he defeated the forces of evil with a combination of magical spells and combat skills, powers he inherited from his mother, a white fox spirit (kitsune). When a monk accompanied by two children visited Seimei asking to be taught the ways of onmyōdō, Seimei's senses kicked in. Suspecting the children were in fact shikigamis (ghosts summoned by onmyōdō masters to do their bidding), he chanted an incantation and made them vanish into thin air.

Marie Laveau

The Voodoo Queen of New Orleans ran a beauty parlour for the city's elite

Born in 1794, Marie Laveau was of Louisiana-Creole descent and worked as a midwife, herbalist and Voodoo practitioner, the secrets of which were revealed to her by a Senegalese rootworker called Dr John Bayou. Despite Voodoo being common practice in New Orleans, it was at times banned during Louisiana's history, in part due to its sinister reputation. But this didn't stop people from seeking Laveau's help. Inspired to immerse herself in religion in the wake of her mother's death, Laveau healed the sick with potions and magical charms, told fortunes, saved condemned men from the gallows and even held ceremonies involving Voodoo spirits. Connection with these spirits was achieved through music, singing, dancing and often the use of snakes. A good deal of Laveau's history has been orally shared by practitioners of Voodoo, each tale more embellished with drama and hearsay, further cementing Laveau in the lore and history of the Deep South.



Laveau incorporated Catholic traditions like statues of saints, holy water, incense and prayers and combined them with her voodoo beliefs to create her rituals

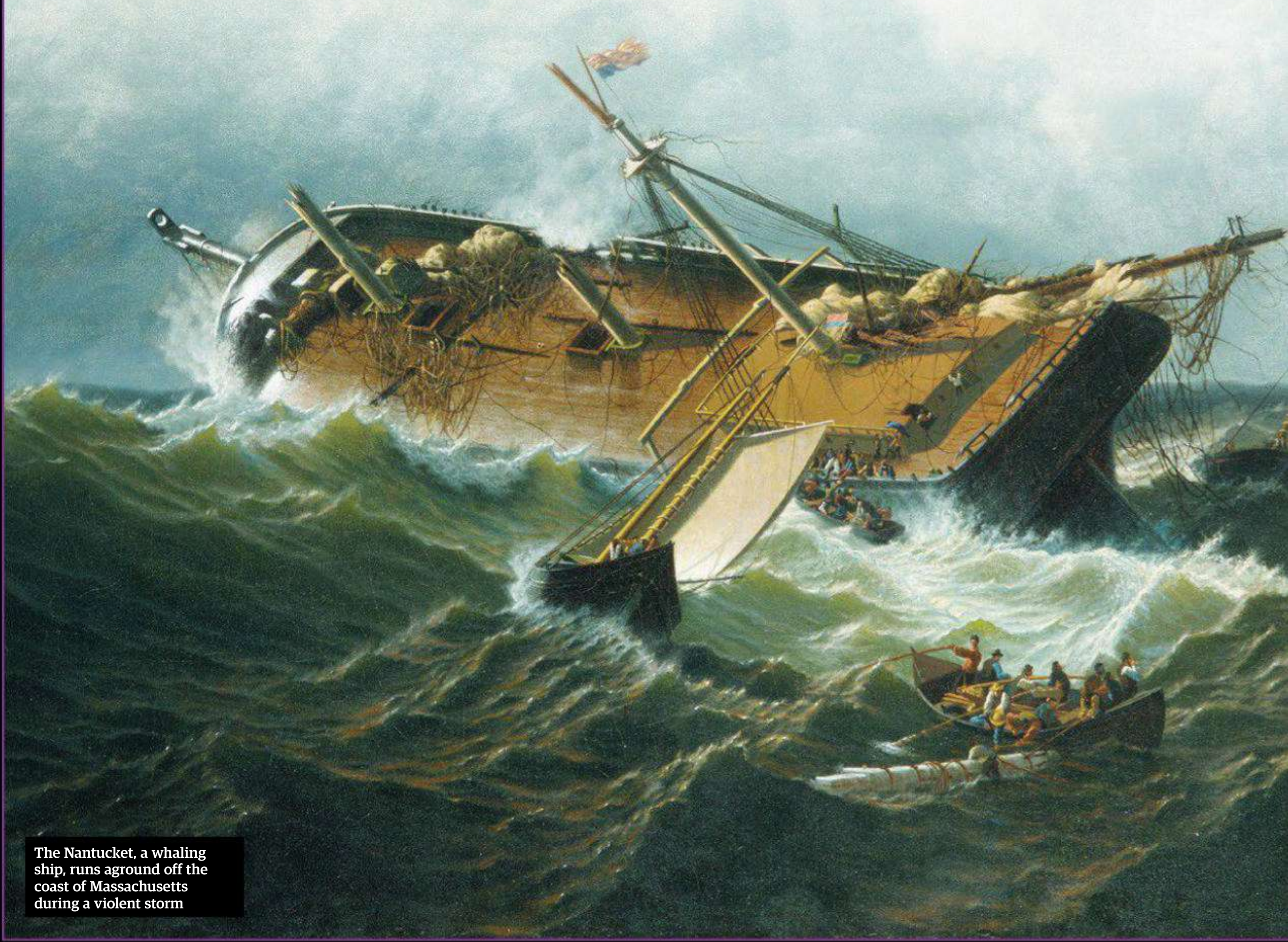
> *"Kelley spent seven years working alongside Dee to summon spirits in the hope of interpreting their wisdom and thereby learning of new lands that the English were yet to discover"*

Image source: Getty; Alamy

The Magician of Marblehead

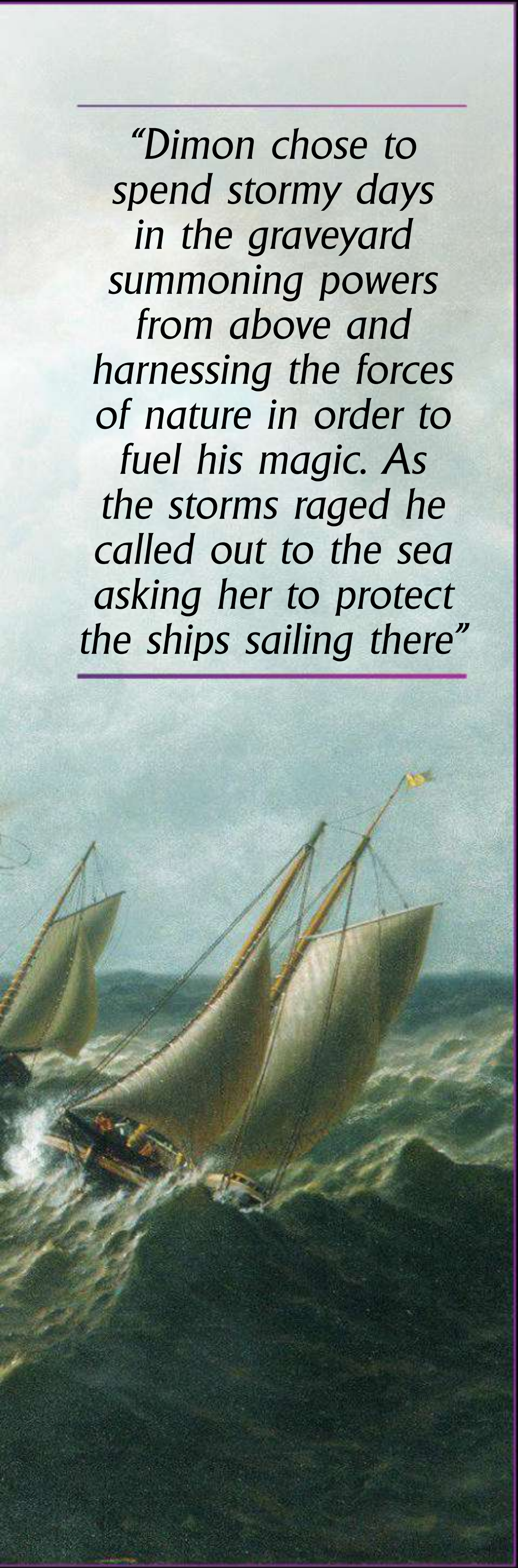
Edward, or possibly John, Dimon, or maybe Diamond, was the mysterious grandfather of renowned 18th Century seer, Moll Pitcher

Tales of Edward Dimon vary greatly depending on the narrator, however, one thing is clear – he was known and respected by many as Wizard Dimon – the Magician of Marblehead, Massachusetts. Born in 1641, Dimon lived during the time of the Salem Witch Trials. The weathered sea captain remained in the town following his retirement, choosing to spend stormy days in the graveyard summoning powers from above and harnessing the forces of nature in order to fuel his magic. As the storms raged he called out to the sea asking her to protect the ships sailing there. Countless sailors would attest to having heard Dimon's voice over the dangerous waters helping to guide them safely home; others thought to have seen his face in the storm clouds above. Families would visit Dimon to ask for safe passage of their loved ones, but if he was crossed or took a dislike to a certain crew or captain, then the vessel was often never seen again!



The Nantucket, a whaling ship, runs aground off the coast of Massachusetts during a violent storm

> "Dimon chose to spend stormy days in the graveyard summoning powers from above and harnessing the forces of nature in order to fuel his magic. As the storms raged he called out to the sea asking her to protect the ships sailing there"



Michael Scot

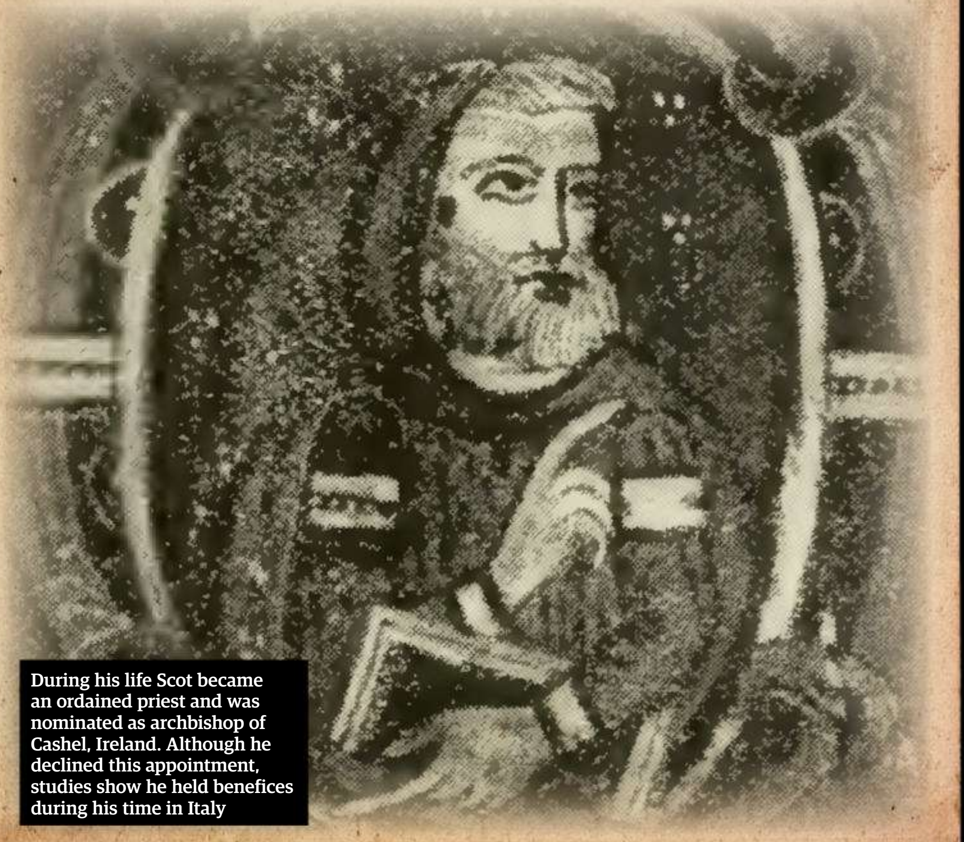
Scottish alchemist Michael Scot's advanced scientific knowledge seemed like sorcery

Scottish scholar Michael Scot was an incredibly well-educated mathematician having spent time at both Oxford and Paris universities, and through his work and travels to Toledo and Bologna and his aptitude for language, he became a skilled translator too. After learning Hebrew and Arabic to an impressive degree he studied the works of Aristotle and subsequent commentaries on his writings. The original writings of Avicenna and Averroes followed, with Scot translating their works into Latin, making them available to a western European audience.

Translation was only one string to his impressive bow; he was also a polymath, astrologer, theologer and astronomer, serving popes and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II as court astrologer and science adviser. It was his in-depth studies of alchemy, however, that saw him viewed as a wizard. Scot wrote numerous works on the subjects of alchemy and astrology and earned a mention in *Dante's Inferno* as a renowned wizard possibly due to his rumoured ability of being able to foresee the future. His advanced understanding of natural sciences as a polymath could also have been interpreted as sorcery at the time, further propelling him into the realm of magician, wizard or seer.

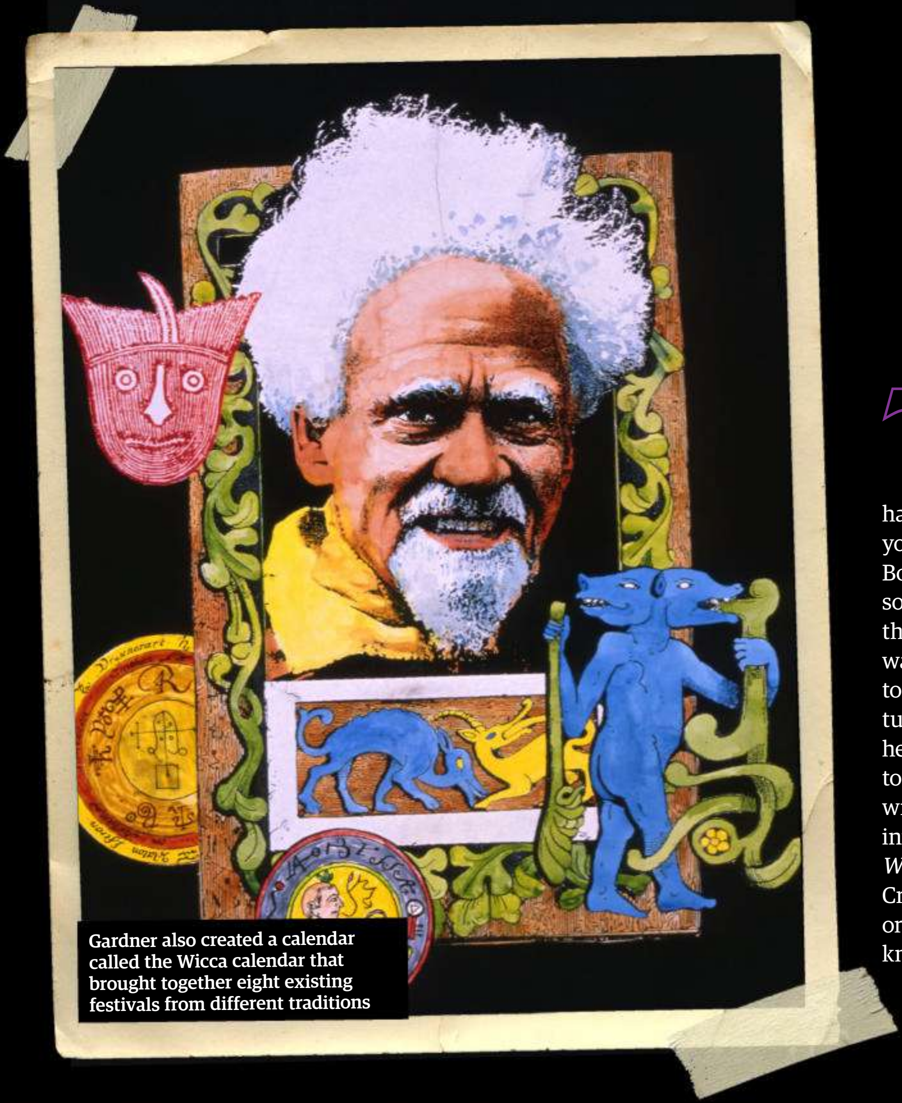
Italian poet and writer Giovanni Boccaccio attributes the same character to Scot in his own writings, while in the ballad *Lord Soulis* by John Leyden, Scot is credited with teaching magic to the protagonist William II de Soules, an evil sorcerer who ends up being boiled alive! It is Gabriel Naudé who strove to defend Scot's good name in his book *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages faussement soupçonnés de magie* (Apology for all the great people who have been falsely suspected of magic).

Fittingly given his powers, Scot is said to have prophesied his own demise after seeing himself struck by a falling stone in a vision, after which he started wearing an iron cap. Unfortunately, he removed it when attending church, and it was inside the house of God that a stone fell from the ceiling, killing him.



During his life Scot became an ordained priest and was nominated as archbishop of Cashel, Ireland. Although he declined this appointment, studies show he held benefices during his time in Italy

Image source: Getty; Alamy



Gardner also created a calendar called the Wicca calendar that brought together eight existing festivals from different traditions

Gerald Gardner

Also known by his magical name, Scire, Gardner founded his own Wiccan religion in the 1950s

Thought of by many as the father of modern witchcraft, Gerald Gardner was born in the North of England in 1884 but spent much of his early life enjoying the warm climate in Madeira, Portugal, having been sent there to help alleviate his asthma. As a young adult his work life took him to Malaya, Ceylon and Borneo, but it was to be Highcliffe in Dorset on England's south coast where he would spend his later years, moving there not long before the outbreak of war. It was here he was initiated into the New Forest Coven, a group claiming to be witches following an ancient tradition. This was a turning point in Gardner's life. From this time onwards he threw himself fully into his new-found religion, going to great lengths to promote and publicise it through his writing. Gardner wrote a number of books giving an insight into the practices and history of his group and their beliefs; *Witchcraft Today* remains one of his best-known. Aleister Crowley, Freemasonry and fellow occultists and magical orders all helped to shape Gardners' theories, which became known as Gardnerian Wicca and spread worldwide.

Xu Fu

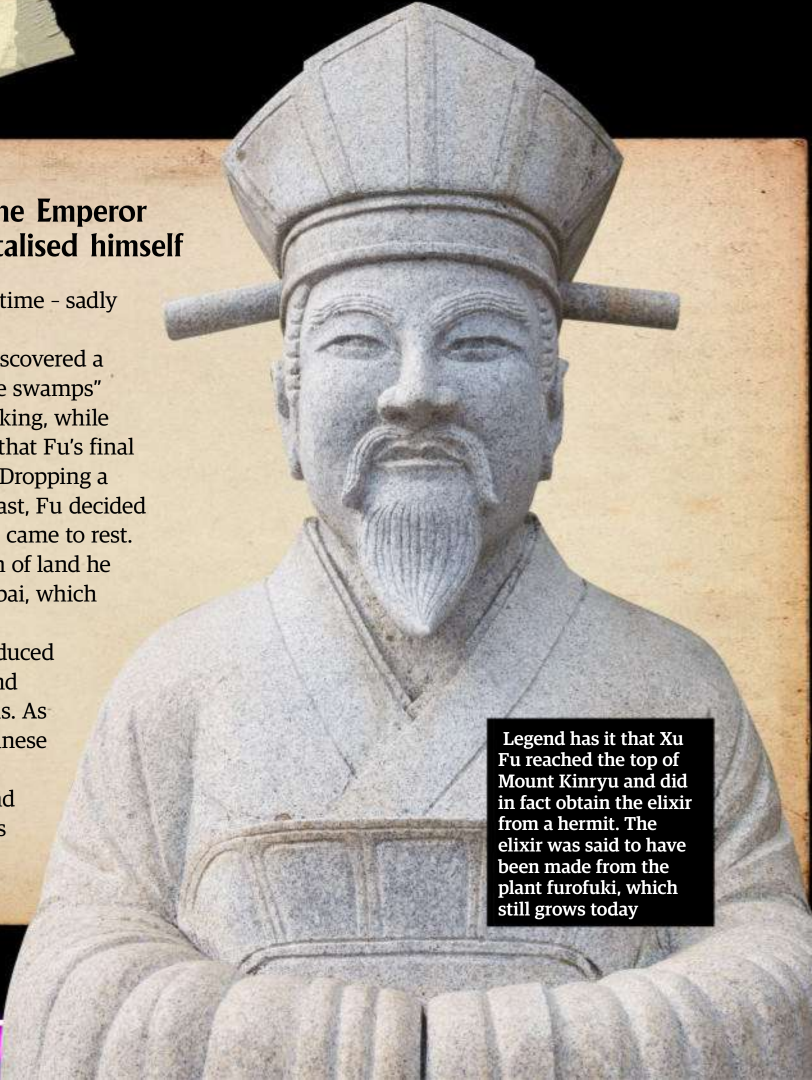
The magician who set off to find the Emperor the elixir of life, only to be immortalised himself

Chinese explorer and alchemist Xu Fu was born in the ancient Chinese state of Qi in 255 BCE and served the Qin dynasty as a court sorcerer. He was later sent out into the eastern seas by China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang, to find the elixir of life. Accompanied in his voyage by craftsmen, crewmen, soldiers, 3,000 virgin boys and 3,000 virgin girls, and a thousand-year-old magician, Fu departed on his mission to Mount Penglai, where the immortals were rumoured to have the elixir.

After years of sailing without success, Fu returned in 210 BCE with stories of a giant sea creature that prevented him from passing. He requested archers that could help him to kill the monster. Desperate to locate the elixir that would enable him to secure immortality, the Emperor acquiesced and ordered his bowmen to sail out and slay the beast. With the way now clear, Fu and his entourage set off for a second time - sadly never to return.

Some sources say that he discovered a land with "flat plains and wide swamps" and announced himself as its king, while some historical texts surmise that Fu's final destination was in fact Japan. Dropping a cup into the sea off Japan's coast, Fu decided to go ashore wherever the cup came to rest. Rather appropriately, the patch of land he first stepped onto is called Bubai, which translates to 'floating cup'.

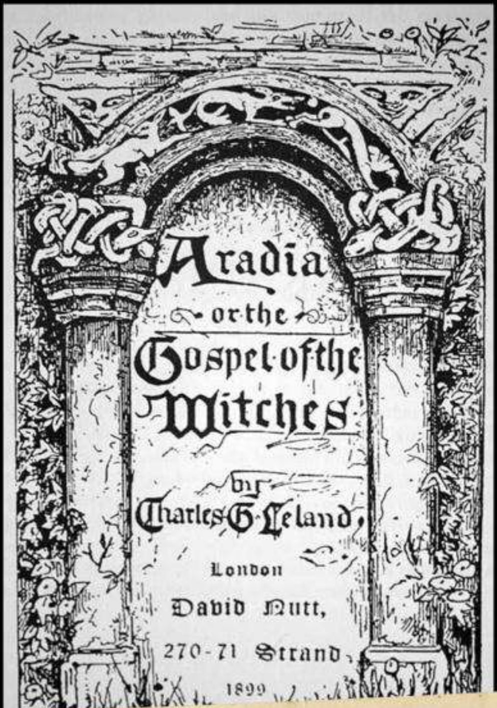
Fu is believed to have introduced many beneficial techniques and plants to Japan from his travels. As thanks for his service the Japanese worshipped him as a god of medicine, silk and farming, and there are numerous memorials and temples dedicated to Fu across Japan.



Legend has it that Xu Fu reached the top of Mount Kinryu and did in fact obtain the elixir from a hermit. The elixir was said to have been made from the plant furofuki, which still grows today

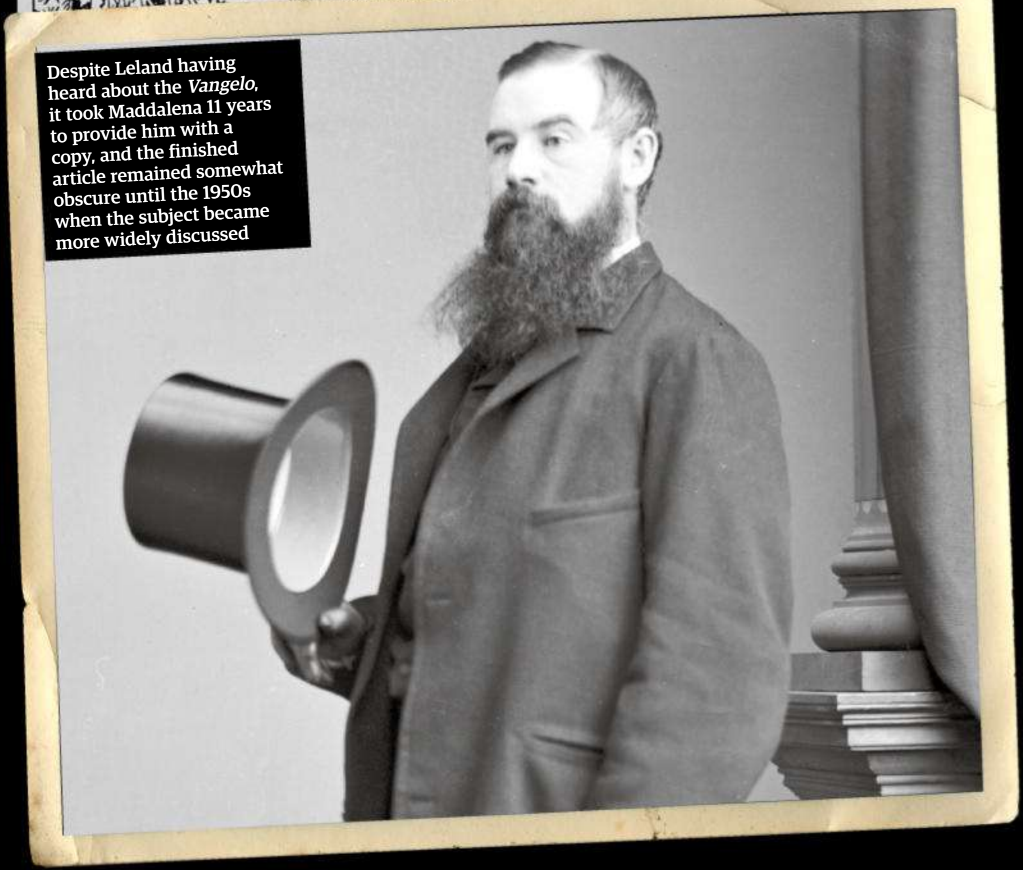
Aradia: The Gospel of the Witches

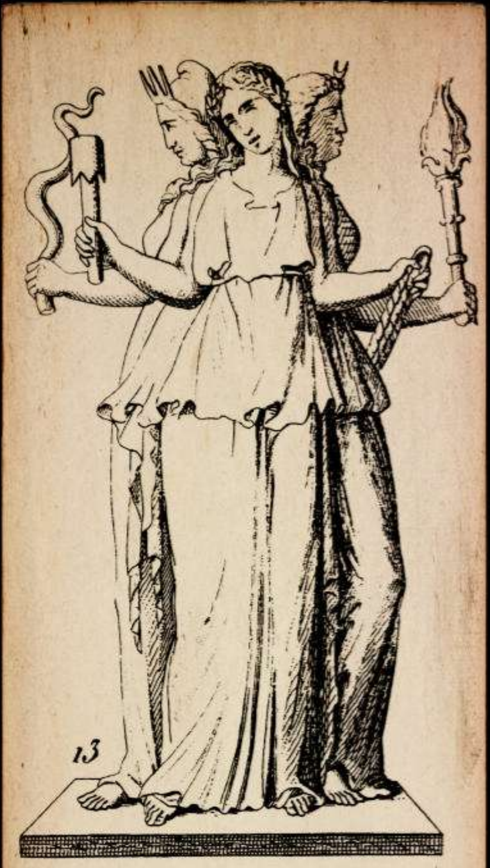
Who was Aradia? A goddess, a folkloric witch figure or a real woman lost to legend?


Aradia
or the
Gospel of the
Witches
by
Charles G. Leland
London
David Nutt,
270-71 Strand
1899

In 1899, a book written by the American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland containing religious text from a group of Italian pagan witches in Tuscany was published. The contents documented their rituals, spells, origins and beliefs and became very influential in the shaping of the pagan religion of Wicca. Comprised of 15 chapters, the book fully portrays all areas of the Italian pagan witchcraft traditions and that of their central figure, Aradia, a goddess sent to Earth to teach peasant folk about witchcraft and its practises in order for them to oppose the Roman Catholic Church and their feudal oppressors.

The text is made up of different parts, with some of the translation into English coming from the *Vangelo*, an original Italian manuscript that Leland is believed to have received from 'Maddalena', an informant on witchcraft beliefs in Italy. Leland included his own research on Italian traditions, folklore and secret teachings.


Despite Leland having heard about the *Vangelo*, it took Maddalena 11 years to provide him with a copy, and the finished article remained somewhat obscure until the 1950s when the subject became more widely discussed



Hailed as the goddess of boundaries and guardian of crossroads, statues of Hecate could often be found at a fork in the road to offer protection to travellers

Hecate

Worship of this dark, ancient Greek goddess has seen a modern revival

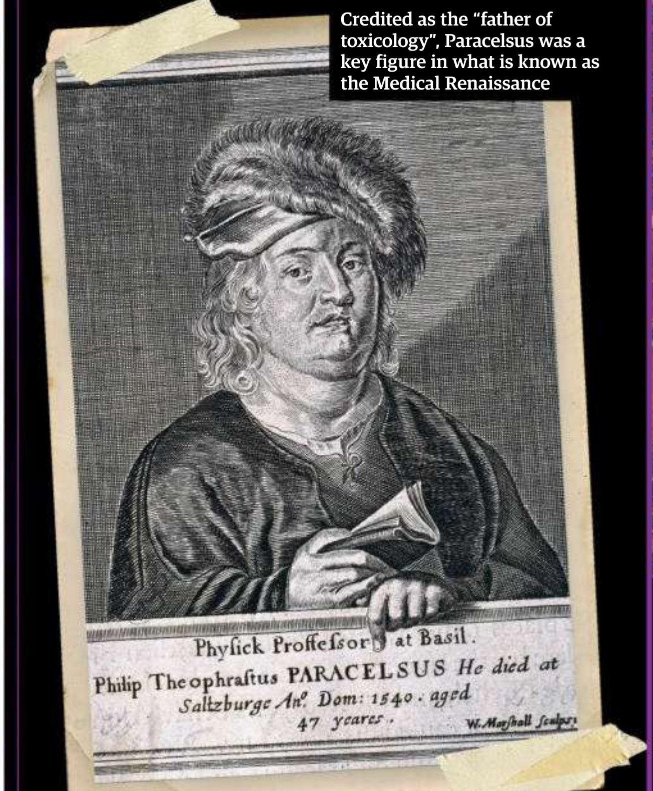
Hecate was a goddess of Greek mythology, her name coming from the Greek word Hekatos, which means "worker from afar", an apt title as she was associated with witchcraft. Said to have worked with spirits and creatures of the night such as hell hounds, she had a strong connection with the night, the Moon, magic and otherworldly doorways. Capable of both good and evil, Hecate is often portrayed with three bodies standing back to back. This is symbolic of her connection with the three phases of the Moon: waxing, full and waning. By using a magical practice called necromancy she was able to communicate with the dead and summon their spirits, which would show themselves in the form of visions or apparitions who were able to impart hidden knowledge and foretell of future events.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Paracelsus

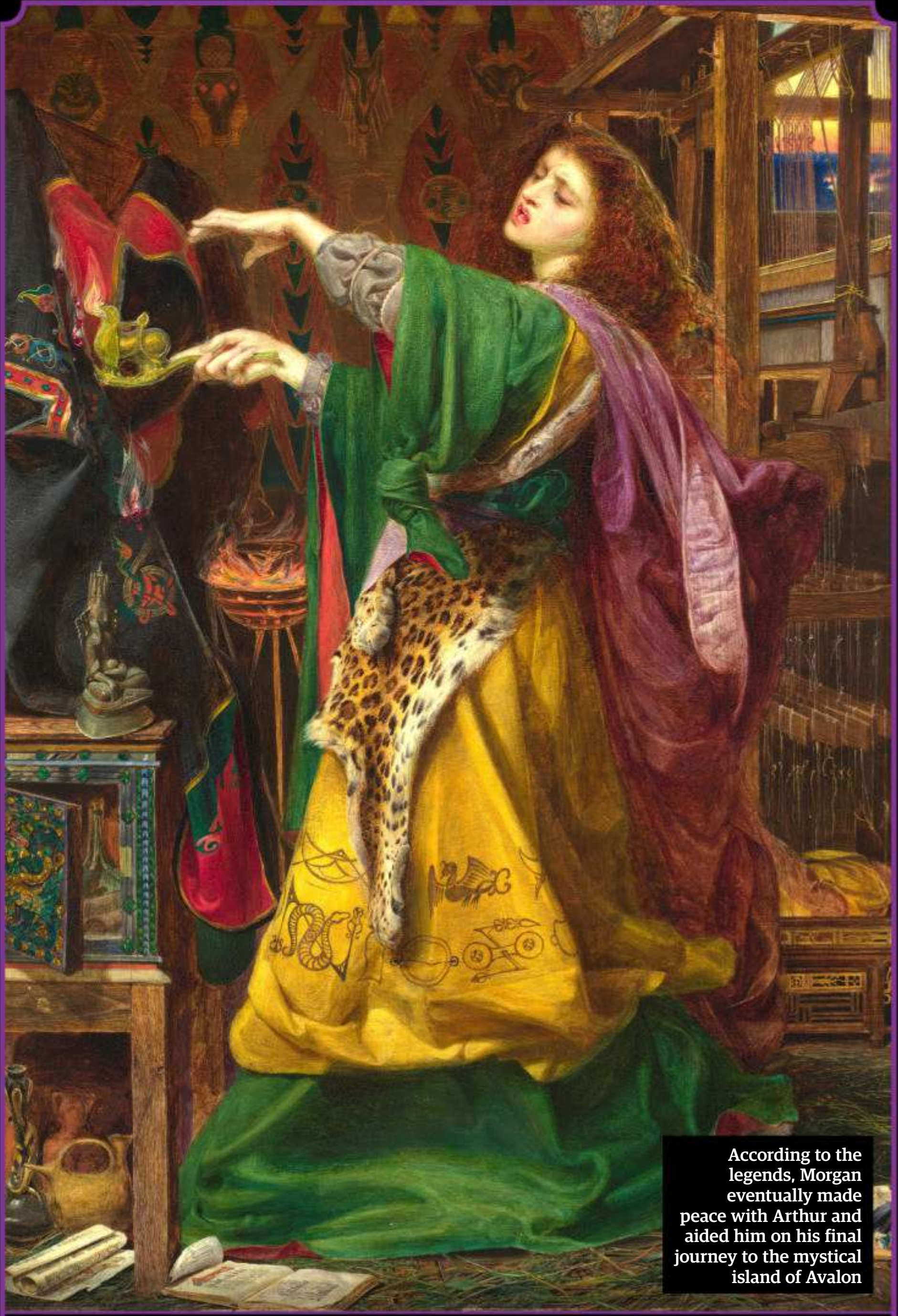
The Renaissance philosopher who surmised the maxim "the dose makes the poison" and fathered toxicology

Phillipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, better known as Paracelsus, was a Swiss pioneer in both science and medicine. As a physician he was the first to use metals and minerals as medicine, and his studies in the field of psychotherapy led him to breakthroughs in the understanding of the subconscious. To Paracelsus, science and religion were not opposing forces but part of the same pursuit: to uncover the secrets of the natural world and thereby God's message. His reputation as a magician came from his writings and works as a diviner and his deep knowledge of astrology. Believing that the root of disease lay in poisons descended from the stars, Paracelsus stated that cures to ailments could be found in herbs and chemical mixtures because the universe was one interlinked entity, meaning that a cure to one poison could be found in another poison.


Physick Proffeſsor at Basil.
Philip Theophraſtus PARACELSUS He died at
Saltzburge An. Dom: 1540. aged
47 yeares.
W. Marshall Sculpsit

Credited as the "father of toxicology", Paracelsus was a key figure in what is known as the Medical Renaissance

> *"His studies in the field of psychotherapy led him to breakthroughs"*



According to the legends, Morgan eventually made peace with Arthur and aided him on his final journey to the mystical island of Avalon

Morgan le Fay

The legendary fairy sorceress and sister to King Arthur may have her origins in a mythological mother goddess

Morgan le Fay (fay as in fairy) is depicted in the Arthurian legends as the King's sister and protector. Blessed with the powers of healing, she is said to have saved Arthur from succumbing to a wound inflicted in battle. However, there is another account in which le Fay revealed a darker side. Angered that her brother had slain a knight she loved, she sent him a cloak in the guise of a gift, but when Arthur requested that the lady who brought the garment into his court wore it first, the woman dropped dead at his feet.

Dion Fortune

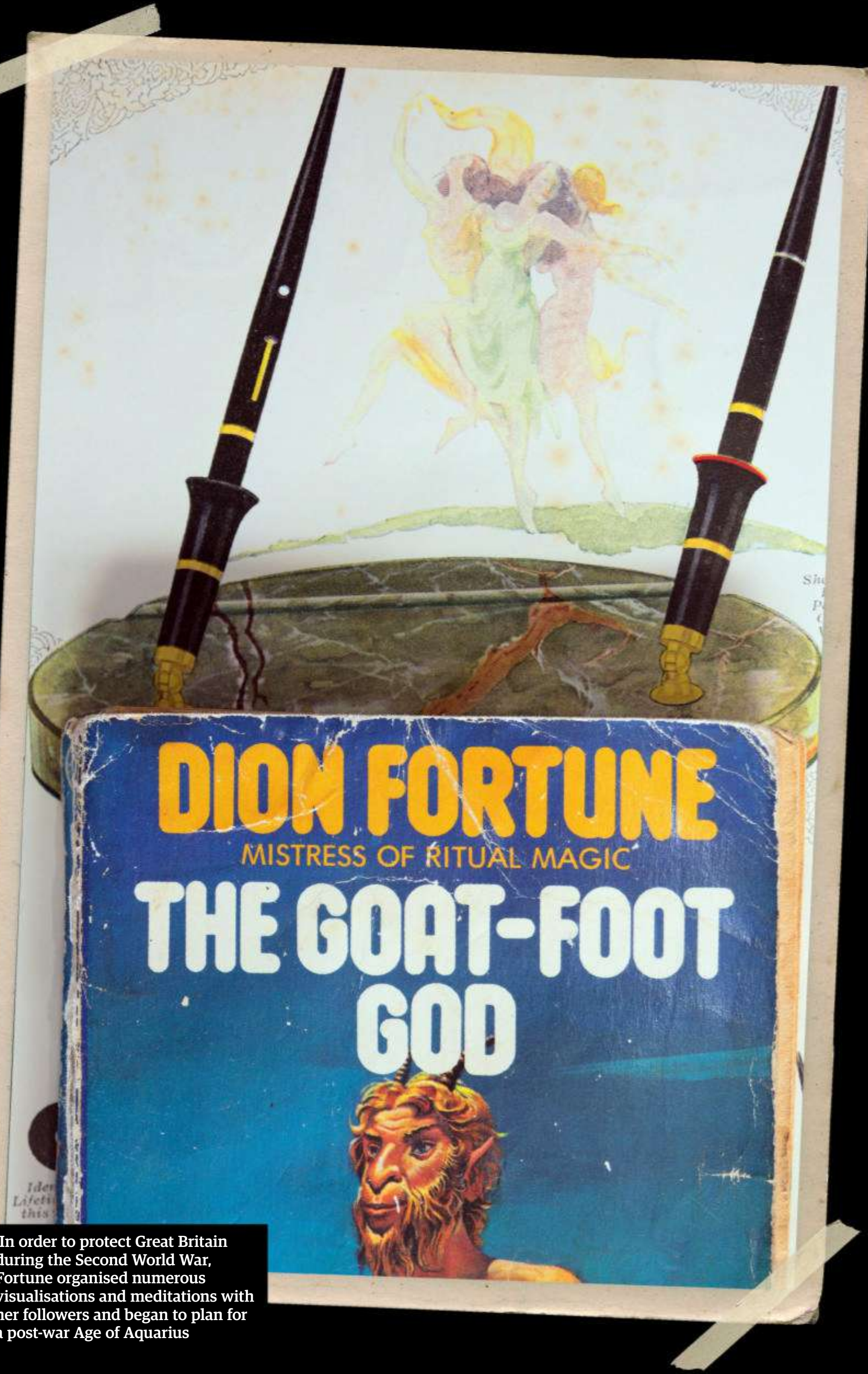
A pioneer of modern magic

Her name alone has a magical quality, but Dion Fortune was originally born Violet Mary Firth in Wales after her wealthy steel manufacturing family moved there from England. Her family held a great interest in Christian Science, and from a young age Fortune is said to have started having visions of the lost city of Atlantis. Following a nervous breakdown in 1913 while attending agricultural college, Fortune developed an interest in studying psychotherapy, occult groups and Esotericism, which she did through the teachings of the Theosophical Society. This is a philosophy drawn from ancient myths and religions including Brahmanism, Buddhism, Spiritualism and the Qabalah. Followers believe that God can be known through mystical insight and engaged in ceremonial magic. It was at this time that Violet changed her name to Dion Fortune, a name derived from her family motto Deo, Non Fortuna - "God, Not Fortune" .

Dion continued to study psychology and psychoanalysis at the University of London and developed her skills as a medium, believing herself to be in touch with the 'Ascended Masters', namely Master Rakoczi and the Master Jesus. In order to decipher and channel these messages from the Masters, Fortune underwent trance mediumship. During one of these sessions Fortune claimed the Masters provided her with a text called *The Cosmic Doctrine*.

During the 1920s she wrote extensively about the occult and its related subjects, producing a number of novels and non-fiction works including *The Sea Priestess* and *The Mystical Qabalah*. In addition to her writing, Fortune worked in a psychotherapy clinic as a counsellor and founded the Society of the Inner Light. Here she taught the Western Mystery Tradition, which is also known as Western Esotericism - a rich and complex combination of spiritual and magical practices, beliefs and philosophies that have influenced Western culture for centuries intellectually, socially and artistically.

Fortune put great importance on sacred locations like Glastonbury, which is where she was buried after dying of leukaemia at the end of the Second World War. She remains one of the most significant and recognised ceremonial magicians and occultists of the 20th century. Her writings and teachings have continued to educate and inspire modern Pagan and occult groups such as Wicca, and her modest memorial is visited by hundreds of people every year.



In order to protect Great Britain during the Second World War, Fortune organised numerous visualisations and meditations with her followers and began to plan for a post-war Age of Aquarius

> "Fortune worked in a psychotherapy clinic as a counsellor and founded the Society of the Inner Light. Here she taught the Western Mystery Tradition, Western Esotericism"

The Premonitions Bureau

In the aftermath of the Aberfan disaster, psychiatrist John Barker became fascinated with the potential to predict and therefore prevent tragedy

In the aftermath of the Aberfan disaster, a mysterious project began to investigate whether psychics could predict and prevent another tragedy

Written by Catherine Curzon

The Aberfan disaster saw mining waste engulf a school in a Welsh village, killing 144 people

The tale of the Premonitions Bureau is one that seems to have leapt straight from the pages of fiction. Borne out of tragedy, steeped in mystery and ended by a death foretold, this so-far unmatched attempt to harness the power of the unknown stands at the very frontiers of psychical research. Yet as the experiment progressed, it soon became apparent that one prediction in particular may have hit a little too close to home.

On 21 October 1966, the colliery tip that towered over the Welsh village of Aberfan was fatally weakened by a prolonged period of heavy rainfall. As the villagers below went about their daily lives and children settled at their desks in Pantglas Junior School, the vast slurry tip suddenly began to shift and as it moved, it became a landslide. It was one of the worst industrial disasters Britain had ever experienced and the Aberfan disaster claimed 144 lives, including 116 children who had set off to school that morning for the last day of term.

As news spread of the disaster and desperate rescue efforts began, people began to converge on the little village from all over Britain. Driven by the shared horror and sorrow for the victims of Aberfan and their grieving families, all these volunteers knew was that they wanted to help, no matter how. One of those who travelled to Aberfan in the days immediately following the disaster was 42-year-old John Barker, a Cambridge-educated psychiatrist with a glittering career, who was employed at a mental health hospital in Shropshire. In his free time, Barker was a student of the paranormal and a member of the Society of Psychical Research. In fact, when he made the trip to Aberfan, he was writing a book about people who had accurately predicted their own deaths. His area of interest would come back to haunt him.

Barker arrived in Aberfan in the aftermath of the tragedy. When he did, he found that stories had already started to spring up amongst the villagers that seemed to suggest that some of the children had accurately foretold the forthcoming disaster and, tragically, their own deaths. He learned that, just the day prior to the landslide, eight-year-old Paul Davies had drawn a picture of a crowd digging through a hillside. Above the scene, Paul had written "the end". Later, Barker would learn of a case in which another local child, ten-year-old Eryl Mai Jones, reported a dream she had had the previous evening to her mother. She described arriving at her school only to find it gone. "Something black had come down all over it," she told her mother, bringing to mind an incident just a few days previously when she had commented, "I'm not afraid to die". Sadly, both Paul Davies and Eryl Mai Jones died when the colliery tip collapsed.

Images: Getty

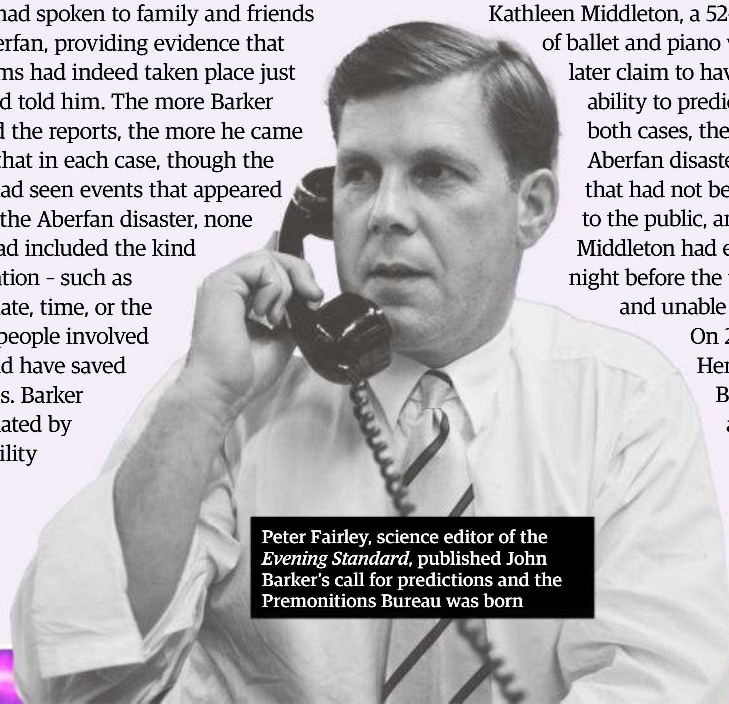
Needing a wider sample than the shocked and grieving people of Aberfan could offer, Barker enlisted Peter Fairley, the Evening Standard's science editor, to publish a call inviting readers to write in if they had experienced a dream of vision that predicted the tragedy at Aberfan. Less than 80 people replied, and of the few letters he received, many were vague or unreliable; others, however, such as that described in the case of Eryl Mai Jones, seemed chillingly prescient. Another correspondent, Carolyn Miller, reported a vision she had on 20 October, when she saw an avalanche of coal hurtling towards a child, followed by a vision of rescuers toiling in the wreckage. She was so unsettled by the vision that she shared it with her friends from church, adding that she had a strong sense that the child she saw had survived. A few days later she saw the little boy in a news report from the village: just as she predicted, he had survived.

The letters Barker received were enough to convince the psychiatrist that there was something more to explore. He theorised that, whenever something tragic was about to occur, that some people began to experience what he termed "pre-disaster syndrome". Essentially, they were somehow able to predict events in the same way a meteorologist could predict the weather. The one thing that particularly fascinated Dr Barker about the more credible reports was the fact that, in many cases, he could verify them. People had been so distressed by their dreams that they had spoken to family and friends before Aberfan, providing evidence that their dreams had indeed taken place just as they had told him. The more Barker considered the reports, the more he came to realise that in each case, though the dreamer had seen events that appeared to predict the Aberfan disaster, none of them had included the kind of information – such as location, date, time, or the names of people involved – that could have saved the victims. Barker was fascinated by the possibility that there could be another stage of development in which these visions could be harnessed and somehow steered towards more precision in order to gain enough information to foretell and possibly even prevent the occurence of future tragedies.

> *"The letters Barker received in response to his advert were enough to convince the psychiatrist that there was something more to explore"*

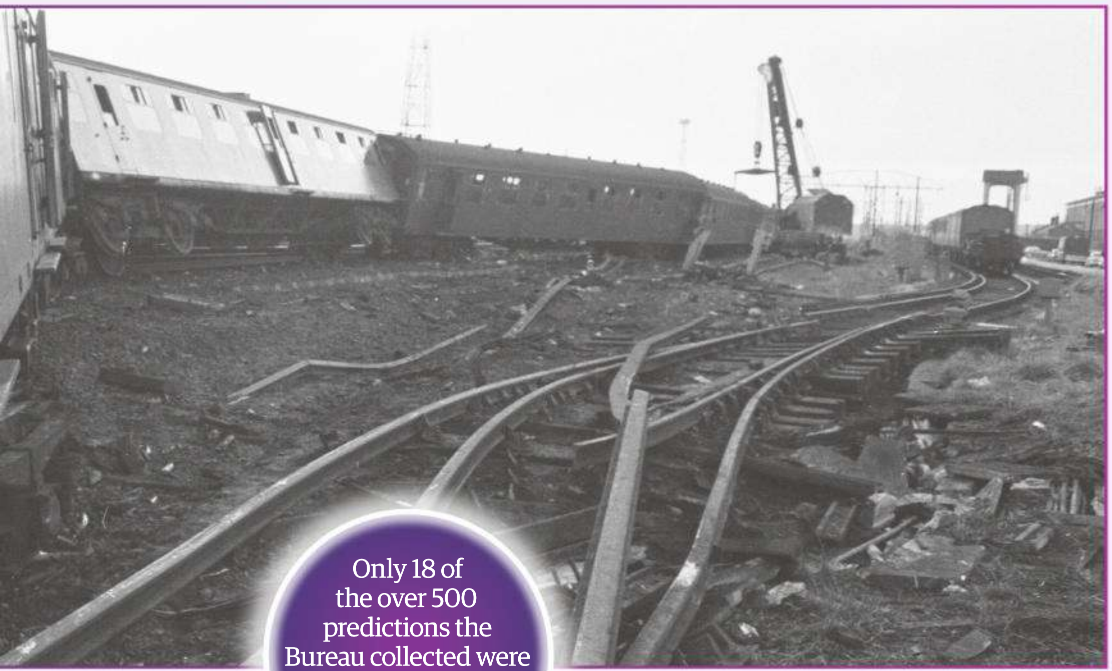
The Premonition Bureau's most prominent seers predicted the fatal Hither Green train crash. Once again though, the visions proved too vague to prevent it

Spurred on by their discoveries, as 1966 came to an end, Barker and Fairley began a project which they called the Premonitions Bureau. They invited readers of the Evening Standard to keep sending in their dreams, which would be noted, stamped with the date received and scored according to an 11 point system. Up to five points would be awarded for "unusualness", five for accuracy and one for timing. As the letters poured in, Barker and Fairley soon concluded that two people in particular stood out from the crowd. Scoring high across the board were 44-year-old Post Office telephonist Alan Hencher, whose premotions had started after he suffered a head injury, and Kathleen Middleton, a 52-year-old tutor of ballet and piano who would later claim to have had a lifelong ability to predict the future. In both cases, their reports of the Aberfan disaster included details that had not been made available to the public, and Kathleen Middleton had even woken on the night before the tragedy choking and unable to breathe.



Peter Fairley, science editor of the *Evening Standard*, published John Barker's call for predictions and the Premonitions Bureau was born

On 21 March 1967, Hencher telephoned Barker to describe a premonition he had just experienced. In it he saw an aeroplane plough into mountains in the Mediterranean, killing 123 or 124 people. The next month, a Bristol Britannia aircraft slammed into a hillside in Cyprus whilst attempting to land in bad weather. The accident killed 124 of the 126 people onboard. Later that year, Middleton and Hencher both predicted the Hither Green rail crash, which killed 49 people when the train derailed on a journey from Hastings to Charing Cross, whilst Middleton also appeared to predict everything from weather phenomena and Grand National winners to the assassination of Robert Kennedy. These were, however, the exceptions to the rule – of nearly 500 predictions collected by the bureau, most didn't come true; Barker believed that 18 premotions had been accurate, and 12 of these were made by



Only 18 of the over 500 predictions the Bureau collected were deemed to have ever come true

GLOBE AIR
HB-ITB

Two of Barker's star psychics seemed to predict the fatal crash of this Bristol Britannia aircraft in the hills below Nicosia

Hencher and Middleton. Barker was particularly occupied by the contradiction inherent in his research: if the predictions enabled the disasters to be prevented, then were they predictions at all? Even worse, did such clairvoyant visions and the fact that they lacked sufficient detail to report and prevent them, mean that the tragedies couldn't be prevented anyway, as they were predetermined whatever happened?

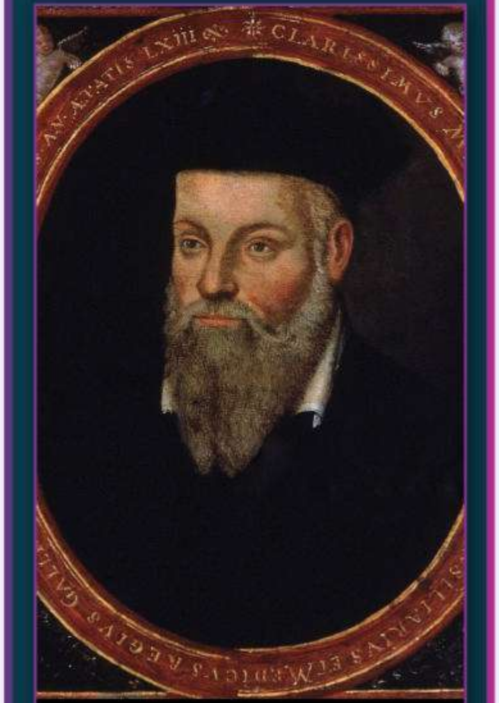
A year after the Predictions Bureau opened, Hencher and Middleton once again both predicted the same tragedy. Without any collaboration, the bureau's stars had independently foreseen the imminent death of its co-creator, John Barker. Barker was both frightened and fascinated, recording pragmatically, "I suppose anybody who plays about with precognition … must accept what he gets." He died of a brain haemorrhage in August 1968, but was sure to leave behind a memo confirming that his star correspondents had predicted his imminent death.

With the death of Barker, the Premonitions Bureau seemed to have lost its driving force. It closed down before he and Fairley had been able to achieve their dream of officially placing their findings before Parliament and the British Medical Research Council. Whatever mysteries they might have decoded have been lost; though Barker suspected he was on the verge of harnessing the psychic powers of prediction, his research ended with his death, the very demise that the project he had founded and nurtured had foretold.

THE FUTURE FORETOLD

Throughout history, people have looked to mystics and psychics to tell them what the future held. Early seers such as the Oracle at Delphi were believed to have great powers of foresight and have passed into legend and myth. Perhaps the most famous historical seer is Nostradamus, a 16th century French apothecary who believers claim has foretold war, natural disaster and tragedy throughout the ages. His writings are still debated and studied today, and continue to attract believers and sceptics alike. For the former, Nostradamus' prophecies are coded references to some very specific events, whilst for the latter, his apparent powers of prophecy can be credited to nothing more than coincidence or misinterpretations of the original text.

More recently, Baba Vanga, a blind Bulgarian mystic, achieved fame for her powers of prediction in everything from celebrity deaths to American election results. She even accurately predicted the date of her own death from natural causes, 11 August 1996. Over the centuries, those who claim to predict the future have attracted awe and derision in equal measure. Whatever the truth of their abilities, one thing is certain: they will continue to fascinate us as we seek to delve deeper into the mysteries of the world in which we live.



Nostradamus is perhaps the most famous of all historical seers. Translations of his prophecies continue to attract new readers even five centuries after he lived

Images: Getty

Strange places

44 Ley lines and Earth Mysteries

From Stonehenge to ley lines, mysterious structures and energies the world over continue to puzzle us

48 The Ploutonion at Hierapolis

A temple with a deadly secret once thought to be the gateway to Hades

50 Where worlds meet

Explore some of the arcane places of power found around the world

58 Houska Castle

This Czech fortress is said to guard a portal into hell, and was once occupied by occult-obsessed Nazis

60 Cursed landscapes

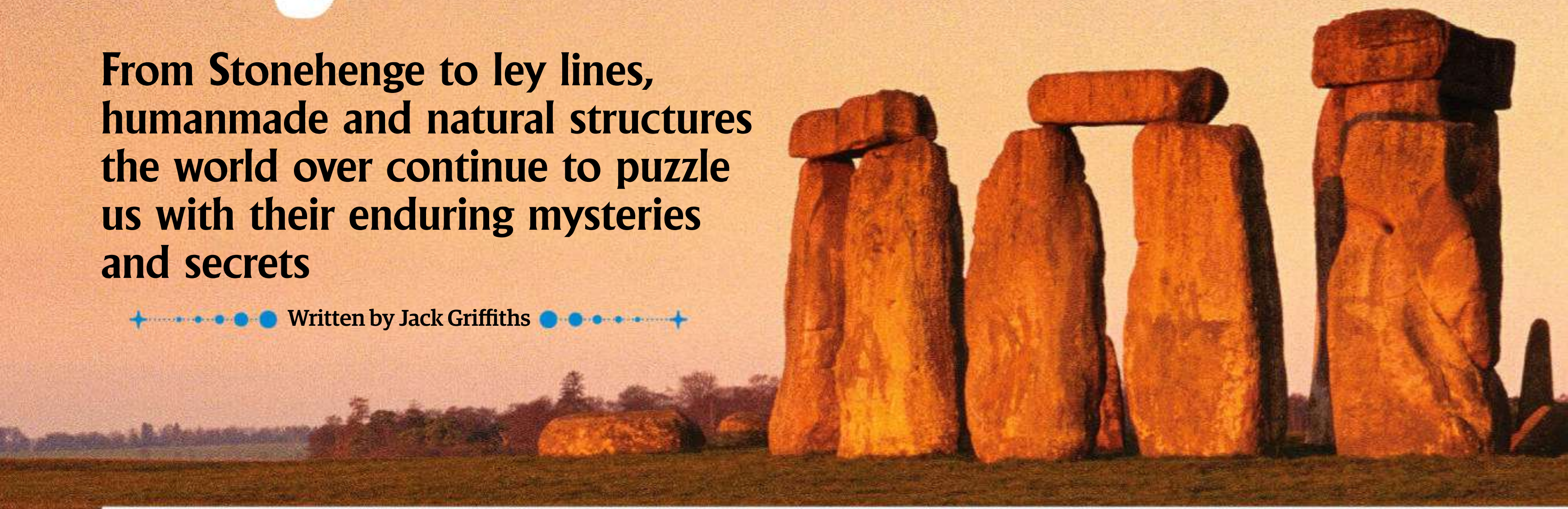
The flipside to places of power are the cursed locations throught the globe that are reputed to be the domains of terror

ENTERING
AREA
51

Ley lines and Earth Mysteries

From Stonehenge to ley lines, humanmade and natural structures the world over continue to puzzle us with their enduring mysteries and secrets

Written by Jack Griffiths

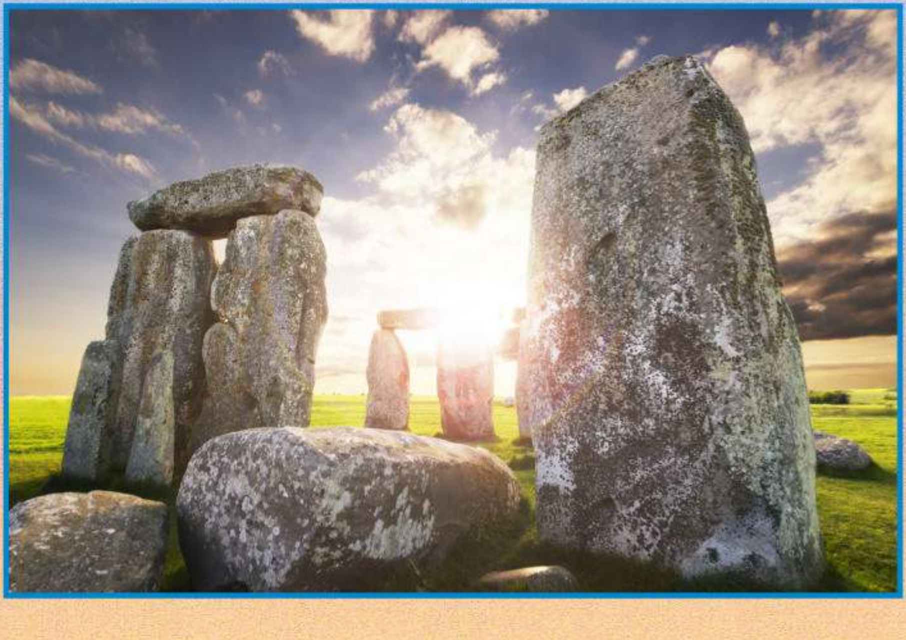


Living all over the globe, almost from pole to pole, humans occupy nearly every corner of the world. Seemingly, nearly everything has already been discovered and understood as humankind has learnt almost all there is to know about the planet and what's on it. However, the Earth still holds a number of mysteries – both natural and ancient human-made structures – which still aren't fully understood today.

Seeing is believing, or so we're told, but gravity hills beg to differ. Also known as magic roads, these are an optical illusion that makes it look you're travelling uphill when you're actually going down. Perhaps best experienced in a car, the phenomenon is caused by the surrounding landscape making it falsely look as if you are rolling uphill, even though gravity is working as normal, taking the car down a slope. Often, the horizon and other points of reference like buildings, aren't viewable from the angle the hill is on, skewing your perception of the slope further, as your brain focuses on the road rather than the surroundings, which would usually prove its true and real gradient. The unusual occurrence means that, across the world, magic roads have spawned myths and legends. One such tale is that a ghost pushes the cars up the hill and, if you brake to stop the ghost, it'll steal all your petrol.

On the south-west coast of Africa is another magical phenomena, this time named after a fairy. Namibia's fairy circles are a spectacular round pattern on the ground that look like the Earth has chickenpox. The circles had long puzzled scientists with some attributing them to termites, while others believed that plants had specifically somehow chosen where to grow. The real answer was grass around the rings sucking all the moisture out of these small areas. With the malnourished grass dying, the circles remained while vegetation grew around them.

Perhaps the most famous structure with mystical associations created by humankind is Stonehenge. The prehistoric monument is famous for the large stones that make up its circular formation but, millennia after its construction, it still isn't completely clear what it is or why and how it was built. The purpose of Stonehenge is believed to be spiritual and it's thought that the stones align with the movement of the sun from sunrise to sunset – a phenomenon that is especially prevalent at the midsummer and midwinter solstices – as well as the monthly phases of the moon. Therefore, it is reasoned that it acted as a sort of neolithic calendar for the changing of the seasons as well as a burial site. Mystery surrounds just how the stones – that weigh more than 22 tons – were moved into place, especially as the type of rock is not found all that locally to Stonehenge. Some believe that the stones were left in the area after the melting of a glacier during an ice age, while



The oldest stones at Stonehenge date to circa 2,500BCE but the function and meaning of the structure still isn't completely understood

The term 'Earth Mysteries' was coined in the 1970s, but the concept goes back to the 17th century and ideas about the ancient druids

others are of the opinion that they were moved into place by humans using wooden rollers or sledges. Despite being one of the most well-known ancient structures in the world, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, we can't say for sure what the true purpose of Stonehenge really was and its mystery lives on.

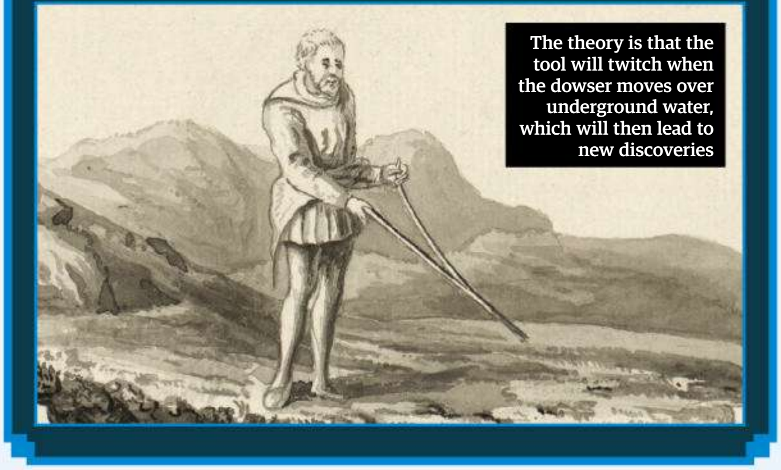
Only 20 miles away from Stonehenge is Avebury, another neolithic formation that, with more than 100 stones, is the largest stone circle in Europe. It is a ceremonial burial site but, unlike its nearby counterpart, wooden structures are likely to have also been on the site. Avebury has a network of banks, ditches and circles but, unlike many similar structures, a square monument has been discovered beneath the site. Surveys also suggest that there was a small wooden building, and both are believed to date back to around 3,500 BCE. The purpose of Avebury isn't known for sure but theories include that it was a ceremonial or religious gathering place, in a similar way to Stonehenge, that was used to measure astronomical events and celebrate the beginning and the end of seasons. The mystery surrounding Avebury grows further as it's supposed that many of the stones were moved, buried or destroyed by order of the early Christian church as it was believed that they were relics of pagan worshipping. Some were also used for construction during stone shortages in the 18th century so the site may have been larger and more complete than it is today.

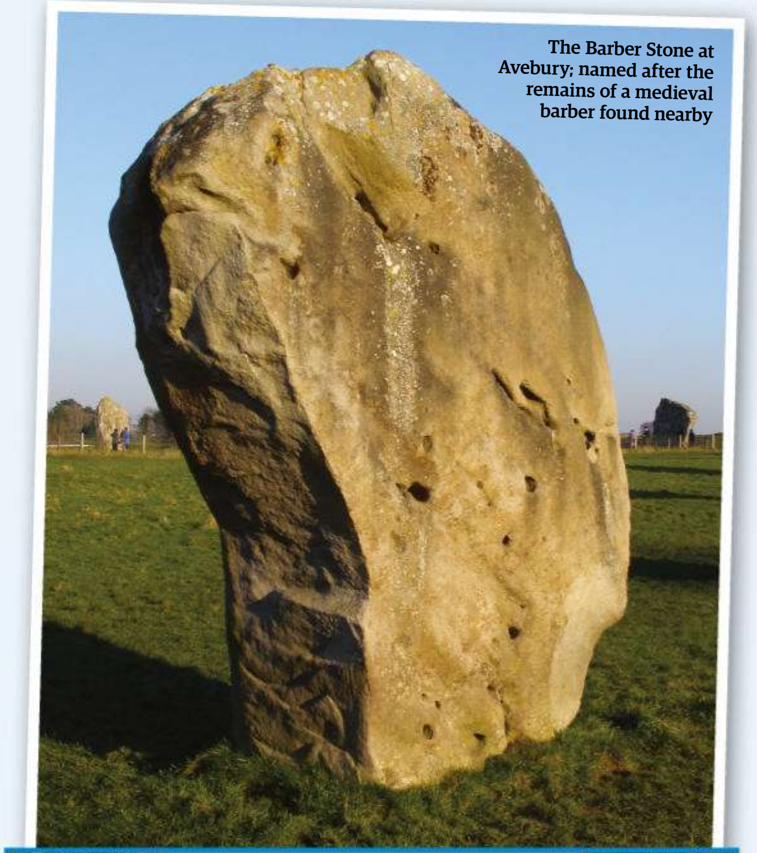
In parts of England, some of the rolling hills have large chalk figures emblazoned upon them. A prominent example is the 50-metre Cerne Abbas Giant, which depicts a man carrying a club. It is unknown who created it with some believing it was the Celts while others suggest it was created in the Anglo-Saxon era or even during the English Civil War. It is thought that couples would venture up to the Giant by night in the hope its distinctly phallic symbolism would bless families with children. Another glyph at Uffington, Wiltshire, illustrates a giant horse, and a similar design was used on Celtic coins, although its unusual design means that some believe it to represent a dragon. These vast images were thought to symbolise or honour gods and bring good luck. One story behind the Uffington White Horse is that it will awake and dance upon the hill if King Arthur were to rise again. Recently, it's theorised that it may have been created for the Celtic and Roman goddess of horses, Epona. These markings have inspired more recent versions including the Osmington

Images: Getty

HOW ARE THESE MYSTERIOUS SPIRITUAL LOCATIONS FOUND?

Dowsing is the use of wooden or metal rods to detect hidden archaeological features. When held out, the Y-shaped instrument is seemingly moved by hidden energy and can locate underground water and oil, or potentially lead to undiscovered ancient objects. Research has shown that dowsing only works if the user already has some prior information of roughly where the target can be found and the tool is unable to locate anything by itself. The only recording success from dowsing has been through anecdotes and not scientific fact. Indeed, the rods may look like they move towards an area that contains subterranean water but it's only because of the movements of the user's arms that this happens. This is what's called the ideomotor effect, where someone moves unconsciously but believes that the movements aren't caused by them but by something else - supernatural or otherwise. A similar phenomenon occurs when a Ouija board is used. In addition, dowsers usually operate where it's known that water is underground anyway. Therefore, the idea of dowsing is built on random chance. This doesn't stop dowsers being called in to locate water to this day, however. Well, if it works, who needs a reason why?


The theory is that the tool will twitch when the dowser moves over underground water, which will then lead to new discoveries


The Barber Stone at Avebury; named after the remains of a medieval barber found nearby

As well as being best experienced in a car, gravity hills can be tough for unsuspecting walkers or cyclists who think it's a simple downhill slope

White Horse made for King George III in 1808, and a 1.5 acre kiwi bird in New Zealand created in 1919 after the First World War to welcome home returning New Zealand troops.

One theory combines natural and human-made structures at specific locations across the globe. Ley lines involve the idea that historical monuments were purposely constructed in a connected network and are an example of ancient lost knowledge. It's proposed that this formation was used purposely to create spiritual ties between ancient sites. This belief can be as small-scale as connections between Stonehenge and Avebury or a much larger scope such as between the Great Wall of China and the Egyptian pyramids. This thought can also be expanded into crop circles and natural landscapes such as Uluru, or areas with similar names and topology like St Michael's Mount in the UK and Mont St-Michel in France. The concept of ley lines revolves around the idea of the Earth's spiritual energy rather than a physical or navigational link between locations. Ley lines vary between cultures with the idea of fairy paths originating from Ireland, dragon lines from China and spirit lines from the Incan societies in South America. In the UK, St Michael's Line is a supposed 350 mile ley line that exists between St Michael's Mount in Cornwall and Norfolk.

Over the Irish Sea, jutting out from the Northern Irish coast, is a famous landscape known as the Giant's Causeway. A formation of hexagonal columns, it was formed 50-60 million years ago by the cooling of superheated rock into distinctive shapes. The ancient lore behind the landscape howver states that the striking causeway was created by the mythical Irish hero Finn MacCool who was a giant trying to get closer to a rival giant in Scotland. Modern technology has since dispelled the folklore behind the causeway but the name has stuck. Scientific experiments on samples of basaltic rock in Iceland demonstrated that the cooling process that formed the causeway and also created another remarkable natural formation which reaches into the sky rather than stepping out into the ocean.

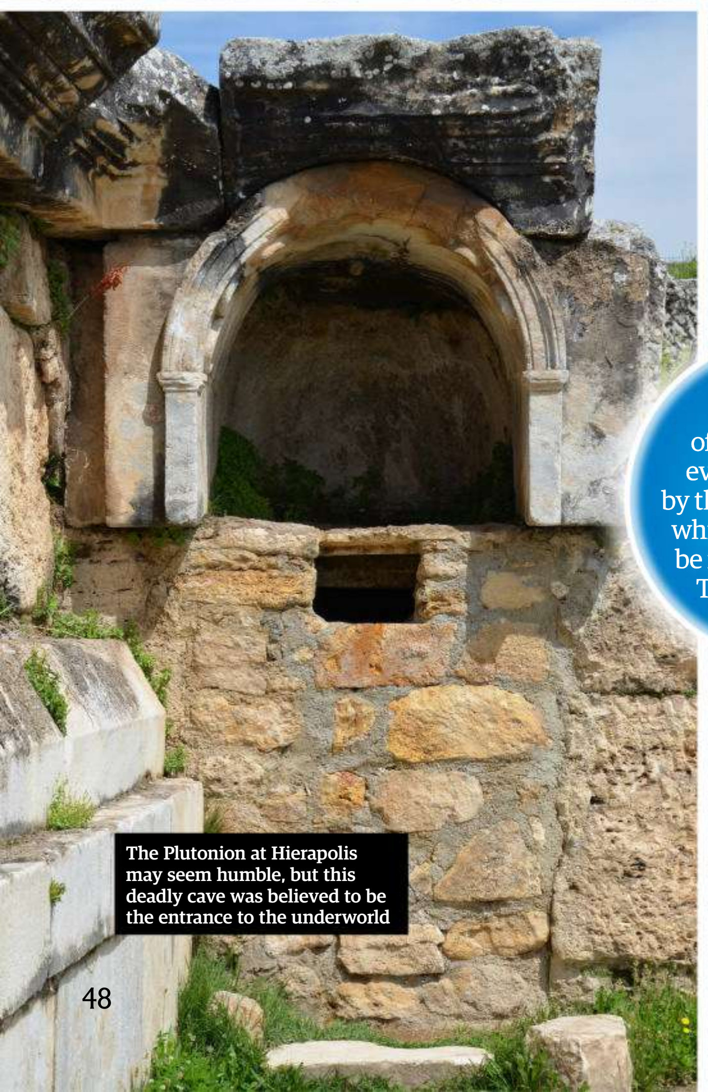
Standing alone on the horizon, the genesis of the Devil's Tower in Wyoming, USA is still tricky to understand. A thick spire of rock shooting up into the air, it's theorised that it originated as subterranean molten rock that rose to the Earth's surface as one huge mass. Erosion over 50 million years has left only the strongest rock to become a tower hundreds of metres in the air. A particularly tall tale explains why it is known as the Devil's Tower. The Native American Sioux had a story that a giant bear scratched at a mountain while chasing children and, eventually, it had clawed for so long that only the Bear's Tower remained. However, a mistranslation mean that 'bear' was substituted for 'bad god' in interpretations, which then became 'devil'. Not for the first time, a misunderstanding has formed a myth out of a legend.

A study in the 1980s unearthed proof that the Cerne Abbas Giant wore a cloak and stood upon a dismembered head

Ley is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'clearing in the woods'. The Malvern Hills area in Worcestershire, England is believed to carry ley lines

The Ploutonion at Hierapolis

The ancient city of Hierapolis was eventually ruined by the seismic fault on which it stood; it can be found in modern Turkey's Denizli Province



The Plutonion at Hierapolis may seem humble, but this deadly cave was believed to be the entrance to the underworld

THE PLOUTONION AT HIERAPOLIS

Since its discovery in 1965, the Ploutonion at Hierapolis has fascinated scholars, who have investigated this revered path to the underworld

Written by Catherine Curzon

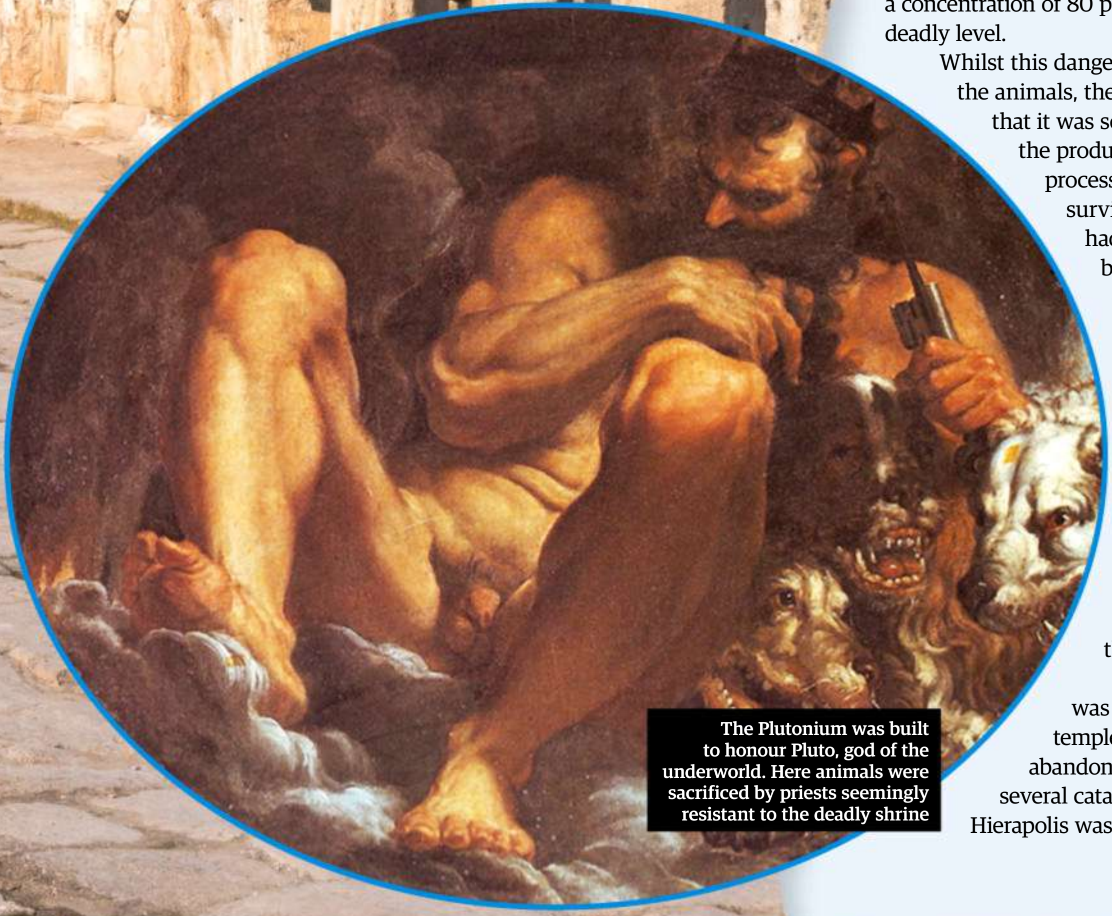
In the ancient city of Hierapolis in what is now modern Turkey, archaeological excavations in 1965 revealed the Ploutonion, otherwise known as Pluto's Gate. This ancient site, which stands on a seismic fault, was once believed to be the mouth of a passage that led into Hades itself. To pass through the mouth of the shrine was to invite death itself.

The construction date of the Ploutonion is unknown, but the ancient, now-ruined city beside which it stands was founded in approximately 190 BCE. It was constructed in tribute to Pluto, the god of the underworld, and deliberately placed above a natural cave through which thermal waters and a fatal gas pass.

The Ploutonion is far from grand, just large enough for one person to enter. As visitors watched, priests would lead a tethered animal into the mouth of Pluto's Gate. When they emerged from the rumoured gate of hell, the animal was dead. The priest, meanwhile, was safe and well, a sure sign of his favour in the eyes of Pluto. The apparently invulnerable priests would answer questions for a fee or even sell small birds and animals to spectators, who would place or release them into the cave and watch as they instantly died.

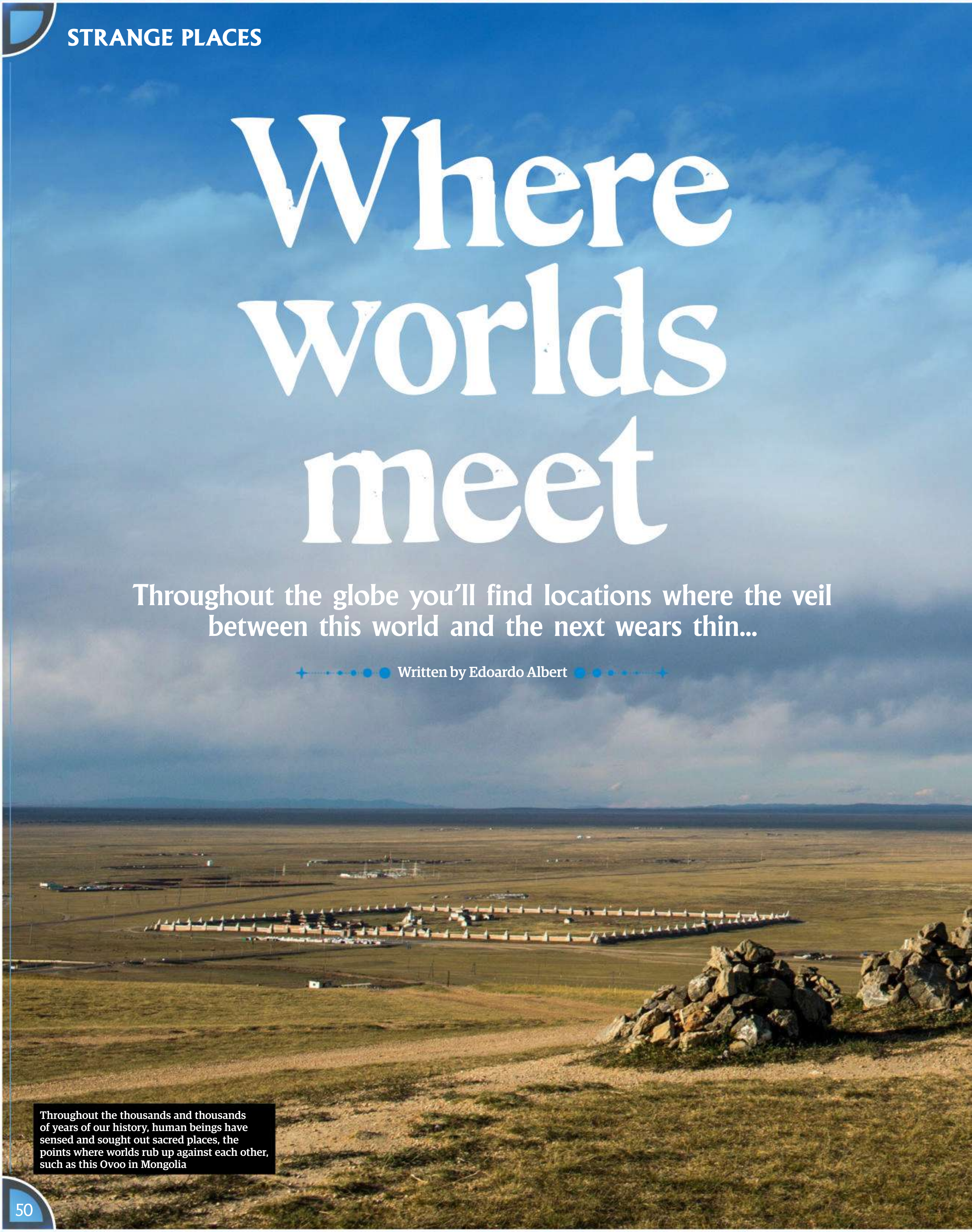
The deadly secret to the Plutonion can be found in the fault line on which it was built. From the bowels of the Earth there emits a suffocating cloud of carbon dioxide (Co2), which is the result of natural geological activity. Normal air contains 0.04 per cent CO2, whilst scientists have found that the area around the shrine sees a concentration of 80 per cent, many times the deadly level.

Whilst this dangerous gas is what killed the animals, the ancient Greeks believed that it was sent by Pluto rather than the product of the Earth's natural processes. The priests who survived exposure to the gas had done so by crawling beneath the cloud of carbon dioxide, unseen by the spectators outside the cave. Unable to follow their example, the animals died without any physical violence being done to them. It was enough to convince people that the holy men were worthy of veneration, which they turned to their financial advantage. Though the seismic fault was vital to the success of the temple, it eventually caused the abandonment of the site. After several catastrophic earthquakes, Hierapolis was left to fall into ruin.



The Plutonium was built to honour Pluto, god of the underworld. Here animals were sacrificed by priests seemingly resistant to the deadly shrine

Images: Getty



Where worlds meet

Throughout the globe you'll find locations where the veil between this world and the next wears thin...

Written by Edoardo Albert

Throughout the thousands and thousands of years of our history, human beings have sensed and sought out sacred places, the points where worlds rub up against each other, such as this Ovoo in Mongolia

Struggling through the day, doing homework or housework, commuting in among the faceless hordes of workers: the world might seem mundane, as if all the wonder and strangeness has been drained from it. Our busy modern lives allow little to no time for looking up to the sky in wonder.

But if you should take a moment, pause, and look around: there are marvels everywhere. In the lives of the people you meet, in the stories beneath the streets you walk, and in the places glimpsed while passing.

Everything around us tells a story. William Blake had it right. But open the doors of perception and everything around us would appear as it is, infinite, bathed in holy light. But while we walk with heads bowed under the weight of work, we can still sometimes look up and go out to these special places. Pilgrimage, in its widest sense, is one of the oldest human impulses. It's an outward journey to renew our inward selves. The places listed below, and their ilk throughout this book, call on us to embark on that bi-fold pilgrimage, going forth so that we might return forever altered.

In the following pages we will take you to some of these locations of wonder and power, the narrow spaces where worlds rub up against each other affording us, sometimes, a glimpse, or even a passage through. These, though, are just ten. There are many more, some famous, others known locally, a few secret to all but those who seek. There will be some in the streets and houses and fields where you live, and among the people you meet, should you but look for them.

> *"Pilgrimage, in its widest sense, is one of the oldest human impulses. It's an outward journey to renew our inward selves"*

Image source: Alamy, Getty

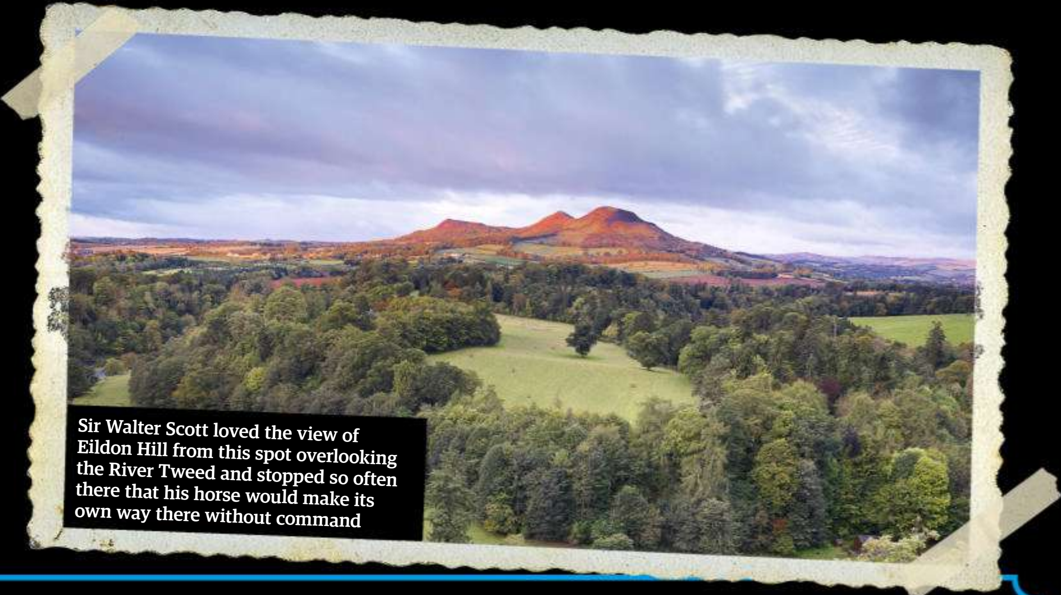
The Hollow Hills

The border between England and Scotland hides a fairy secret

In the border country between Scotland and England rises a three-peaked summit, the Eildon Hill. It is one of the thin places, a place where worlds rub against each other. It was under a tree, now marked by the Rhymer's Stone, that Thomas de Ercildoun (c.1220 - 1298) fell asleep, only to be wakened by the Queen of Elfland, with a kiss. The Queen took him under the hill, to her realm, where he remained for seven years, returning to the mortal realm with the gift of prophecy and an inability to lie.

After many years in the mortal realm, a white hart walked into Thomas's village and, seeing it, Thomas bade his fellows farewell and followed the hart, never to be seen by mortal eyes again.

A later story tells of a horse dealer who was hailed when riding home by a man wearing ancient clothes, to whom he sold his horse. This happened several times, until the intrigued horse dealer asked to seal the deal with a drink in the buyer's house. The old man brought the horse dealer to a knoll, known locally as Lucken Hare, where he opened a door into Eildon Hill, taking the dealer down into a huge cavern where knights lay sleeping beside their horses, and where a sword and horn lay on a table in the middle of the cave. The old man bade the dealer to take them up, and he blew the horn. That was the wrong choice: the dealer was thrown from the cave, landing broken on the side of Eildon Hill where he was found, dying, the next day.



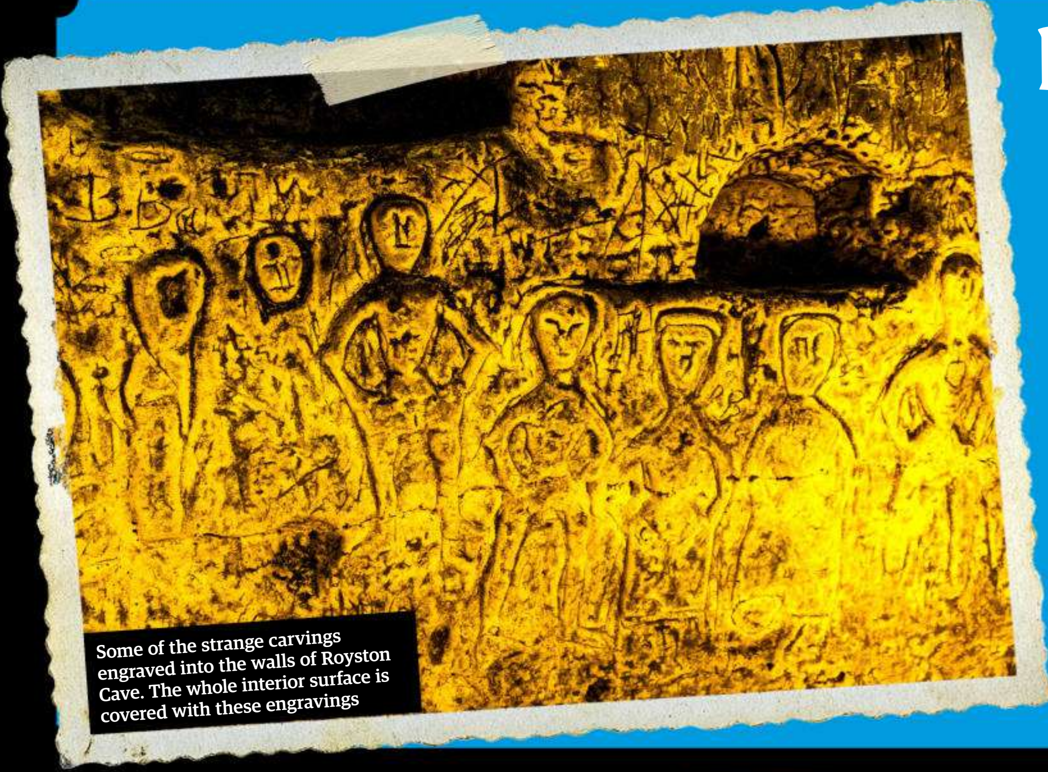
Sir Walter Scott loved the view of Eildon Hill from this spot overlooking the River Tweed and stopped so often there that his horse would make its own way there without command

The Sword of St Michael

These shrines to the warrior archangel make the shape of his sword across Europe

Seeing Mont-Saint-Michel for the first time it's almost impossible to believe it's real, let alone that it was built a thousand years ago

Starting from the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean, then cutting diagonally south eastwards across Europe to Mount Carmel in the Holy Land, there are a line of seven monasteries dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel. The line starts with the mysterious Skellig Michael hermitage on a jagged rock sticking out of the sea seven miles west of County Kerry in Ireland. It continues to St Michael's Mount, a tidal island off the south coast of Cornwall and crosses the Channel to Mont-Saint-Michel, another tidal island that looks so extraordinary it appears to be CGI rather than medieval. The line continues south east, through the Sacra di San Michele, a glorious mountain-top abbey in Piedmont, Italy, and cuts down through Italy's spur, crossing the oldest shrine to Saint Michael in western Europe at the Sanctuary of St Michael the Archangel in Gargano. The line slides down Italy's heel, crosses the Adriatic and heads through Greece before passing the Panormitis Monastery on the isle of Symi. It terminates at the Stella Maris Monastery on Mount Carmel. According to legend, at least three of these monasteries were built at the command of the archangel himself.



Some of the strange carvings engraved into the walls of Royston Cave. The whole interior surface is covered with these engravings

Royston Cave

A mysterious cave packed with inexplicable carvings

In the middle of the town of Royston in Hertfordshire, directly under the crossroad where the ancient thoroughfares of Ermine Street and the Icknield Way meet, there is a cave. It is shaped like a bell, albeit a huge bell: eight metres high and five metres across. The cave was dug out of the chalk and its interior walls are etched with mysterious carvings. But no one knows who dug it, why or when. The cave was discovered in 1742 and there is not a single record of it from before then. The reason for its excavation, when it was dug, what the carvings mean, why it was lost; all of that remains a complete mystery. It's open to visitors at weekends from April to September; visit and see if you can solve the mystery.

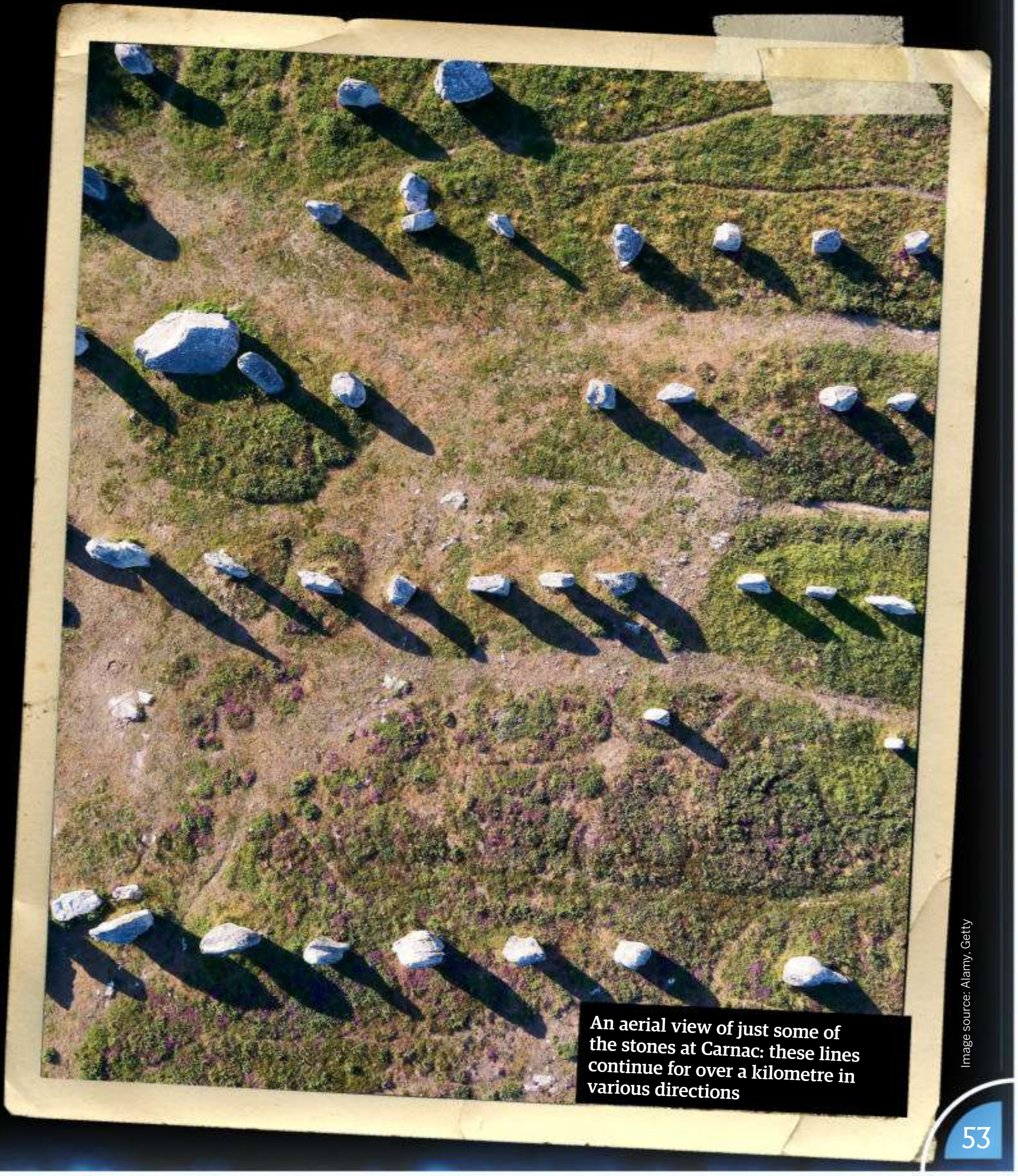
The Stones of Carnac

Over 3000 mysterious megalithic stones march across the French landscape

Climb to the top of Brittany's Saint-Michel tumulus, the largest grave mound in Europe, and look out over the surrounding landscape. The tumulus was built around 5000 BCE, long before Stonehenge. Its summit is the best place to appreciate the true scale of the lines of standing stones that stretch out around it, heading to the horizon.

The Carnac Stones are the densest arrangement of stone alignments in the world, with rows of menhirs (single standing stones), dolmens (tombs made from stone) and tumuli (burial mounds) dotting the landscape. The Stones were set into place thousands of years ago, probably around 3300 BCE, but some may be a thousand years older. There are numerous theories as to their purpose but none has achieved wide acceptance.

Cloaked in such mystery, many myths have accrued, such as the stones are the petrified remains of a marching Roman legion. It's best to visit from October to March, when it's possible to have the place almost to yourself. Between April and September, visits are by guided tour only.



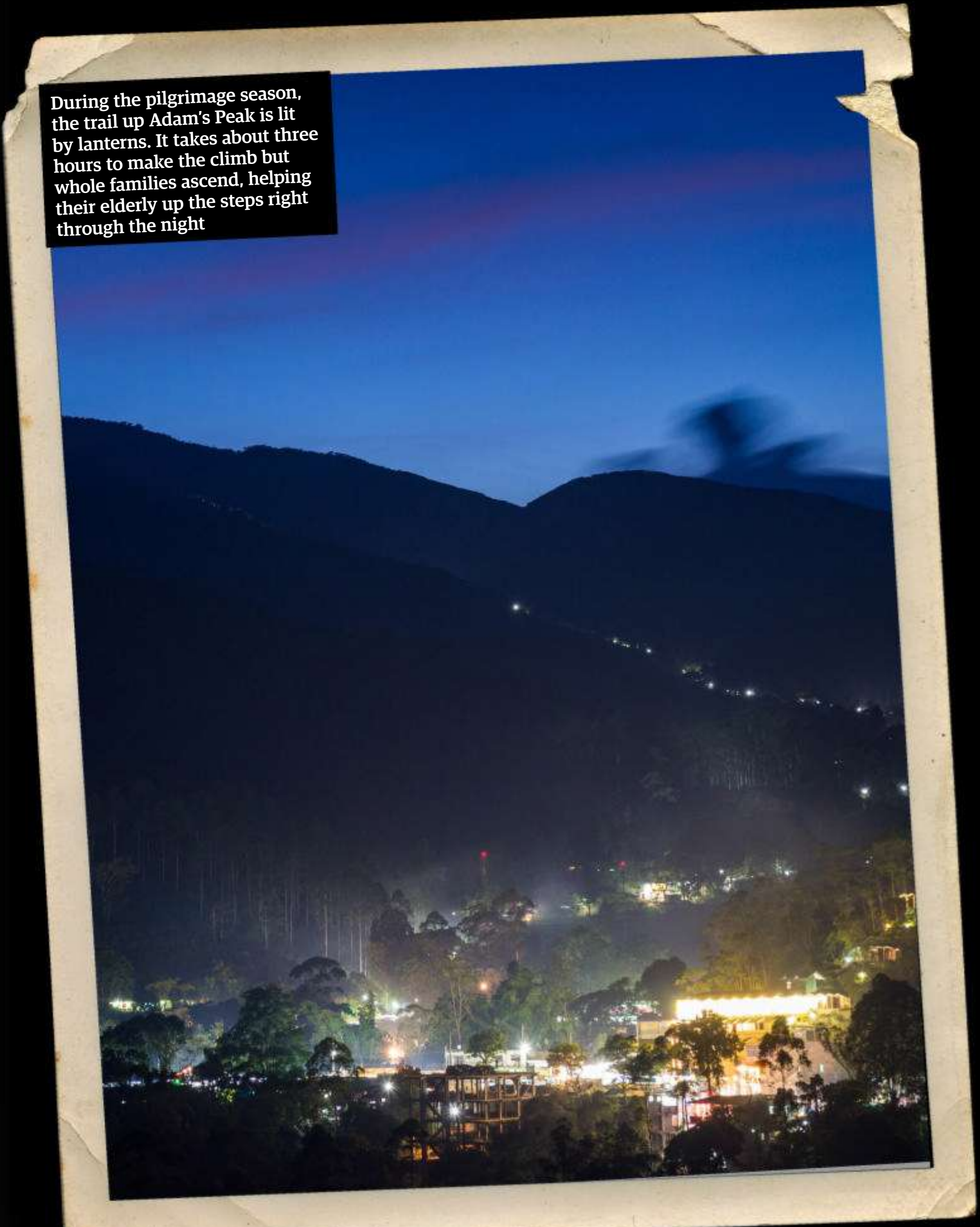
An aerial view of just some of the stones at Carnac: these lines continue for over a kilometre in various directions

Image source: Alamy, Getty

The Holy Mountain

Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims all make this three-hour climb

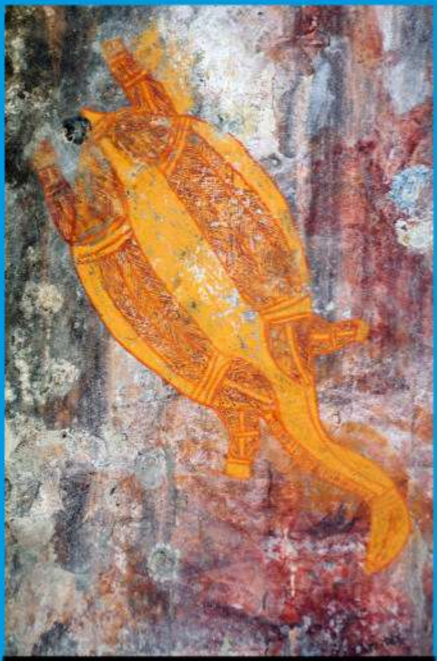
There are many holy mountains in the world but none quite so sacred as Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka. This conical mountain, rising out of the hill country in central Sri Lanka, has a footprint-shaped imprint in its summit, the Sri Pada, that is sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. During the pilgrimage season, from mid-December to May, pilgrims ascend the mountain during the night, climbing thousands of rock-hewn steps up the steep slope to arrive at the summit before sunrise. There is a Buddhist shrine at the summit enclosing the Sri Pada and, upon reaching the summit, pilgrims ring a bell to announce the completion of their pilgrimage. Arriving before dawn allows the pilgrims to see a remarkable sight: the sun, as it rises, casts the shadow of Adam's Peak westwards, over mountains or clouds. The official pilgrimage season ends in May because heavy rain and high winds make it dangerous to climb the mountain, although the Buddhist monks maintain their shrine at the summit throughout the year.



During the pilgrimage season, the trail up Adam's Peak is lit by lanterns. It takes about three hours to make the climb but whole families ascend, helping their elderly up the steps right through the night

Where the Dreamtime endures

Ubir features 42,000 years worth of Aboriginal art



This painting of a turtle at Ubirr is just one of the many paintings on the spectacular rock formation, part of a tradition of painting and repainting that has endured for 40,000 years - an unimaginably long time

Kakadu National Park, in Australia's Northern Territory, is about the size of Wales and contains thousands of pieces of Aboriginal rock art as well as an unknown number of sites sacred to the Bininj and Mungguy peoples who have lived in and around the park for 60,000 years. The Dreaming songlines of Kakadu tell of the Rainbow Serpent who made the rivers and waterholes that run through this incredible landscape. Ubirr, Nourlangie Rock and Nanguluwu are among the rock art sites open to visitors.

It's best to go on organised tours when visiting Kakadu. Firstly, that way you can ensure that you don't inadvertently break a tribal taboo and trespass onto sacred land forbidden to visitors and, secondly, you need to be extremely cautious of the formidable saltwater crocodiles that wait silently in the area's waterholes, looking out for potential prey.

Legends galore at the Tor

From the Holy Grail to King Arthur, Glastonbury Tor is filled with legend

Twin streams of legend meet and twist around Glastonbury Tor, like the still mysterious terraces that wind up to the tower on top of the hill. The tor rises 158 metres (518 feet) above the flat plain of the Somerset Levels, making it visible for many miles around. Because the Levels are often wreathed in low-lying mist, the tor can seem to float in the sky, an optical phenomenon known as Fata Morgana (named for the mythical witch of Arthurian legend, Morgan le Fay: another twist to the folklore that surrounds the tor).

The first stream of legend is immortalised in the opening lines of *Jerusalem*, England's unofficial national anthem and one of William Blake's greatest poems: "And did those feet in ancient time walk upon England's mountains green?" The Gospels contain no information whatsoever about what Jesus did between his childhood and his adult ministry. Some say that he came to England with a distant relative, Joseph of Arimathea, on a trip to trade tin from the mines of the South West. It was Joseph who arranged Jesus' burial following his crucifixion and, according to further legend, Joseph also took possession of the Holy Grail, the vessel Jesus used during the last supper, catching some of his blood in it as he hung upon the cross. According to the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, Joseph later sailed back to England and founded the first Christian church in the country at Glastonbury. Furthermore, when Joseph climbed the Tor to look out upon the surrounding countryside, he thrust his staff into the soil, where it took root, growing into a hawthorn tree that, unusually, flowers twice each year, at Christmas and Easter.

Along with the Holy Grail, Glastonbury is also associated with another legend: King Arthur. The tor, which, before the Levels were drained was often surrounded by water, is sometimes identified with the Isle of Avalon, the mysterious island where the mortally wounded Arthur was taken following his final battle, there to rest until the time came for England's Once and Future King. Indeed, the monks of Glastonbury Abbey, an enterprising lot, claimed to have found the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere near their abbey - although if true, that would have made his later messianic return rather difficult.

With the nearby festival adding new layers to the Glastonbury story, this is one place that continues to exert its power of fascination to this day.

Glastonbury Tor rising above the mist, the fata Morgana mirage, into a blue sky. On days like this, it really does seem like an island in the sea

Image source: Alamy, Getty

The Temple of Amun, viewed from the other bank of the Nile, as it appeared in the 19th century

The land of the pharaohs

The banks of the River Nile are littered with mesmerising monuments

Protected and fed by the regular rise and fall of the River Nile, Egypt produced an astonishingly ancient but enduring culture. Indeed, there's a case for saying that the Copts, who still comprise about ten per cent of the population, are the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Working south, up river along the Nile, there are many sites of extraordinary power and significance, starting at the Giza Plateau, home to the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx. Not too far further south, there is the necropolis of Saqqara, the largest and oldest in Egypt.

Heading down into Upper Egypt, we come to the temple of Osiris at Abydos. The temple raised to Pharaoh Sethi I is particularly well preserved. The temples of Karnak at Luxor are the largest religious complex in Egypt. Most of the pharaohs added their own bits to the Temple of Amun, making it a record of Egyptian history. The Hypostyle Hall, with its 134 stone pillars, is breathtaking. Across the river is Deir el-Medina, the excavated village where the artisans working on the royal temples at Luxor lived. It provides the most complete view of ancient village artisans and their lives yet discovered.

A little further south is the Valley of the Kings where the pharaohs of the New Kingdom were buried, including Tutankhamun. The nearby less-visited Valley of the Queens is equally impressive. Continuing to cruise upstream, we come finally to the temples of Abu Simbel. This wonderfully preserved temple complex was raised to give glory to Pharaoh Rameses II and his wife, Queen Nefertari. It still provokes awe in the visitor. The whole temple complex was moved, stone by stone, to its present site when the Aswan Dam was built to prevent it disappearing under the water.

Jerusalem the golden

The city that has been fought over by Abrahamic religions for centuries

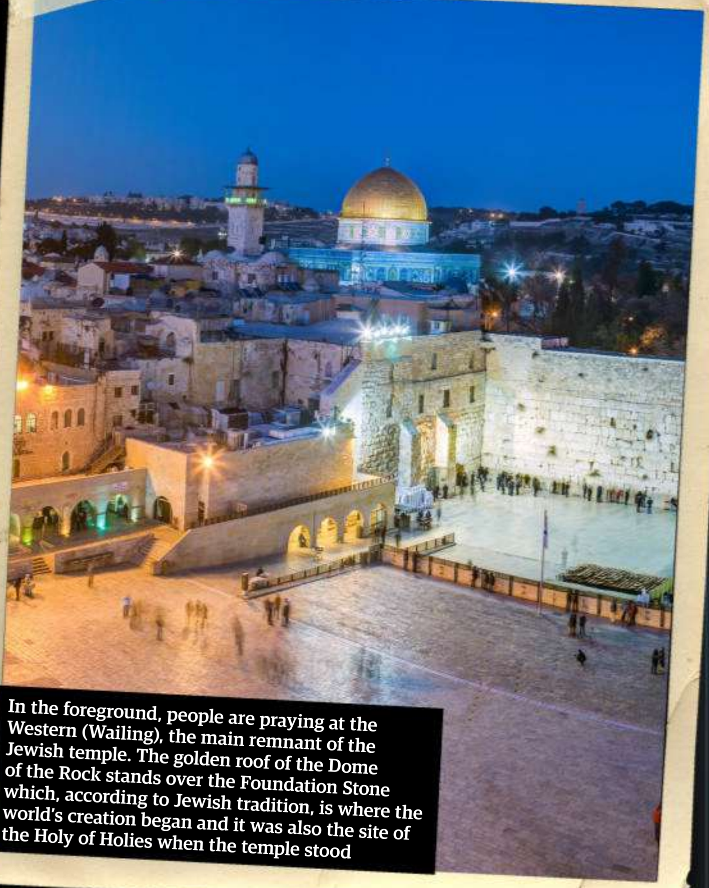
Sacred to three major religions, Jerusalem is home to the holiest sites of Judaism and Christianity, and the third most sacred site of Islam. It's been fought over, besieged, destroyed, raised up, cast down and built anew through the long centuries of its existence. And it only exists for and because of the religious: Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities in the world but it has none of the geographical advantages of other ancient cities; it is not on the coast or on a river, it sits among barren hills and, if not for springs such the Pool of Siloam, it would be untenable as a city. Nevertheless, a city it has been for at least three millennia due to its sacredness.

The Jews made Jerusalem their capital, the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, and Solomon is said to have built the first temple on Temple Mound, at its centre, to house the Ark. That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE then rebuilt as the second temple in 516 BCE, which endured until 70 CE when the Romans destroyed it and banished most of the Jews from the land. The main remnant of the second temple is the Western (or Wailing) Wall, the holiest site in Judaism.

The change in date indicates the switch caused by a carpenter who was crucified by the Romans just outside the old city walls around 33 CE. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and many other sites, witnessed the key events in Christianity's early history.

The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque mark Jerusalem's significance to Islam. It was from here, according to tradition, that Muhammad took his night journey to heaven.

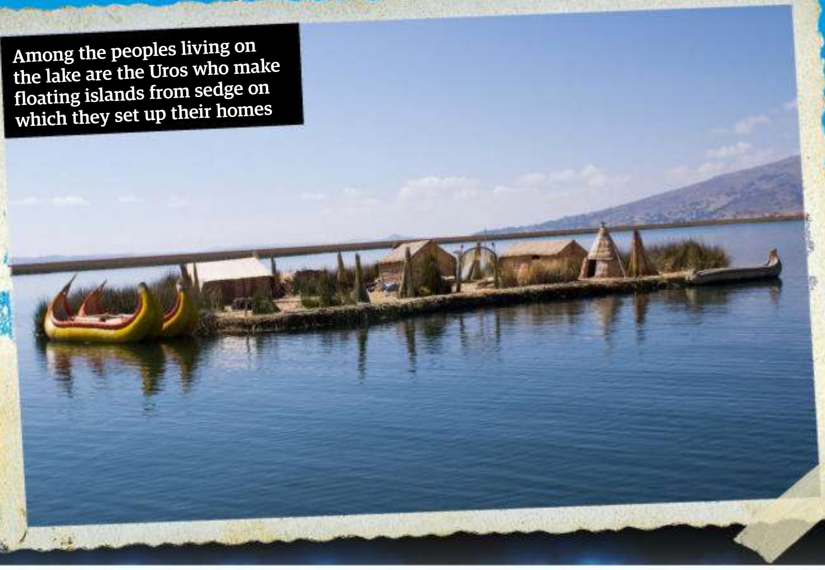
Indeed, such is the significance of this city that there's even a mental condition associated with it: Jerusalem syndrome, where the sufferer experiences a psychotic episode as a result of the overwhelming religious associations that occur when they visit the city for the first time.



In the foreground, people are praying at the Western (Wailing), the main remnant of the Jewish temple. The golden roof of the Dome of the Rock stands over the Foundation Stone which, according to Jewish tradition, is where the world's creation began and it was also the site of the Holy of Holies when the temple stood

The lake where the sun first rose

Take a dip in the lake that sits amongst the heavens



Among the peoples living on the lake are the Uros who make floating islands from sedge on which they set up their homes

Set at a height of 12,507 ft (3,812m) and lying among the majestic peaks of the Andes, Lake Titicaca is a place of wonders. Sacred to the Inca and other Indigenous peoples, legends tell of how the sun and the moon arose first from the islands named for them. These are two of the 41 islands in the lake, many of which are still inhabited by Indigenous peoples living largely traditional lives – many islands have no roads and some permit no machinery at all.

Image source: Alamy, Getty

Houska Castle

This Czech fortress is said to guard a gateway into the depths of hell

Written by Jack Griffiths

About 50km away from Prague stands a castle that seemingly serves absolutely no purpose. Houska Castle was built in the 14th century by the Bohemian ruler Ottokar II. The castle changed hands several times, enjoying a Renaissance redesign in the late-16th century, before falling into disrepair in the 18th century. By the 20th century, the curious legend of Houska Castle had attracted the attention of one particular group of people: the Nazis. Unlike other fortresses of the period, it wasn't meant to house the king. The castle wasn't near any trading route and there was no access to water. Defences were built inside the castle rather than outside – instead of keeping people out, it seemed like the castle was meant to trap something else in.

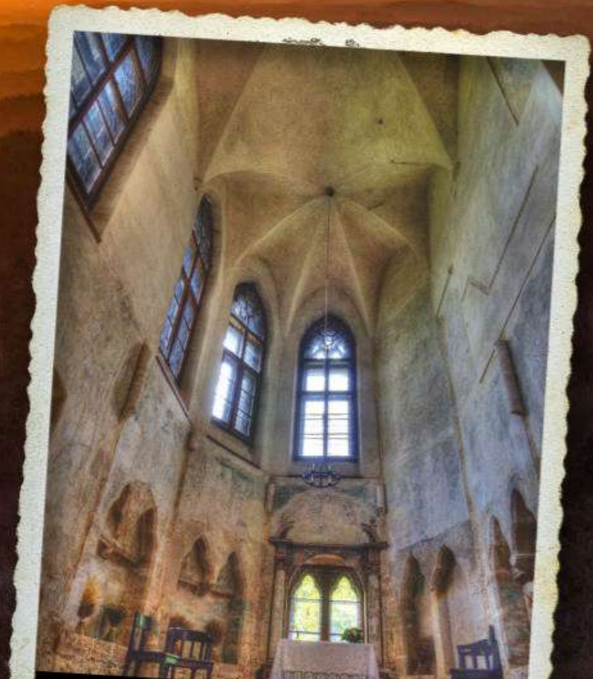
According to lore, this apparently pointless construction was, in fact, built over the gates of hell. A bottomless hole had existed at Houska for centuries, a gateway for demons and evil beings to enter Earth and terrorise people. The area has long been avoided by locals, and even to this day the castle is given a wide berth, with only the inquisitive daring to set foot inside.

Above this fateful hole stands the chapel, dedicated to none other than the leader of God's army, archangel Michael. Frescoes decorate the walls – but their gory tales give an insight into what lurks below, with left-handed demons clawing their way out of the scenes.

However, before the chapel's construction, the hole was involved in some sinister experiments. Attempts were made to fill the hole with rocks, but no matter how many rocks were thrown in, it never seemed to fill. It's alleged that one duke summoned prisoners who had been condemned to death and offered them a pardon if they agreed to be lowered into the hole. Many agreed, expecting to escape with their lives. They were mistaken. There was silence as one was lowered down. Moments later, his uncontrollable screams echoed up from the depths. As he was hauled back out, they discovered his hair had turned white and he'd aged several decades. They never found out what was in there – it drove the prisoner to madness, and he died days later.

Houska Castle's secrets don't end there. Many visitors claim to have experienced supernatural encounters, from the ghost of a woman that stalks the corridors, to curious animal-like presences skittering on the edge of sight. It's these stories and supernatural sightings that struck a chord with the esoterica-obsessed Nazis. From 1939 to 1945, Houska Castle was home to occult experiments, but records were destroyed and it's not known what happened here. However, several skeletons of Nazi officers were discovered during renovations.

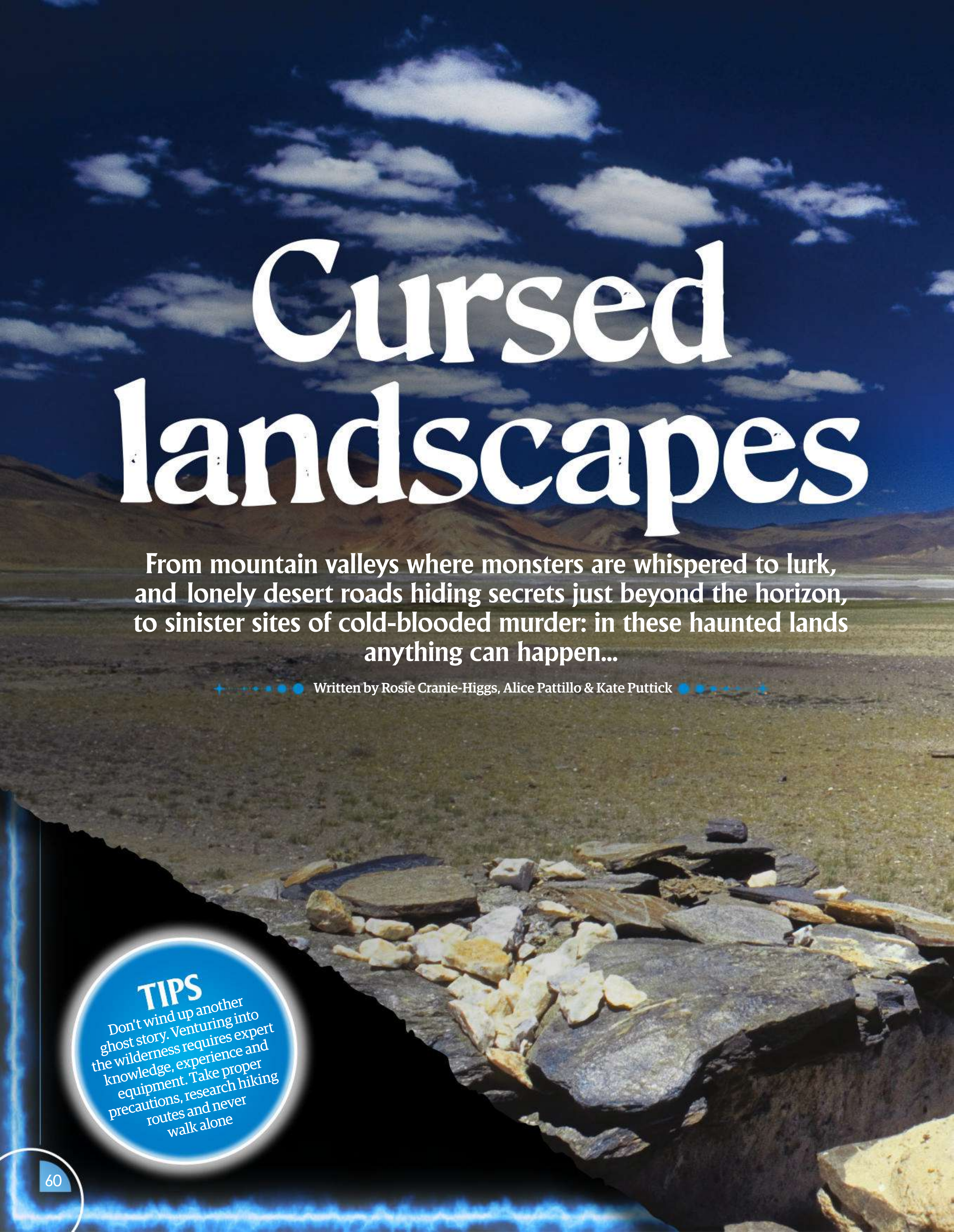
During World War II the castle was occupied by the Nazis, who were rumoured to perform occult experiments there



Houska Castle was initially built without fortifications, a kitchen, or a water source - but with a chapel. The sacred room is decorated with pictures of demons

Houska Castle is constructed over a deep, seemingly bottomless hole that folklore claims is a gateway to hell

Images: Getty, Alamy



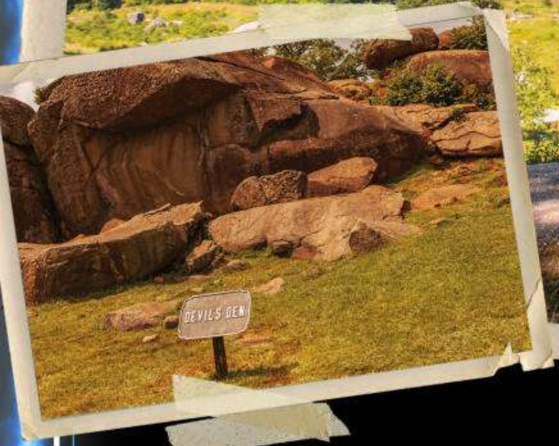
Cursed landscapes

From mountain valleys where monsters are whispered to lurk, and lonely desert roads hiding secrets just beyond the horizon, to sinister sites of cold-blooded murder: in these haunted lands anything can happen...

Written by Rosie Cranie-Higgs, Alice Pattillo & Kate Puttick

TIPS

Don't wind up another ghost story. Venturing into the wilderness requires expert knowledge, experience and equipment. Take proper precautions, research hiking routes and never walk alone



Gettysburg Battlefield

Location: **Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA** *Time zone:* **UTC-5** *Currency:* **US dollar**

Gettysburg is a tremendously haunted town for one reason: the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg. With 50,000 casualties, it was by far the Civil War's bloodiest. No wonder the dead can't leave. In many locations such as Little Round Top, ghostly soldiers march in formation. On Culp's Hill, cries for help beg from the former burial pits, and on the Sachs Covered Bridge, mists rise from the water in the shape of men and a ghost named "Henry" puffs on lit cigarettes. The Devil's Den is the most haunted of all. For centuries, the rocky outcrop was a Native American battleground, and early settlers reported phantom warriors. During The Battle of Gettysburg the Den became known as the "Slaughter Pen". A Texan soldier has been spotted since the 1970s, unkempt and shoeless, and a ghost rider appears to shouting and gunfire before instantly disappearing. The battlefield is now part of National Military Park. You can visit for free, but the guides are worth every penny.

The Brocken

Location: Andreasberg, Lower Saxony, Germany **Time zone:** UTC +1 **Currency:** Euro

The highest peak of the Harz Mountains has long held an association with witches. Upon the top of the mountain are two distinctive rock formations, Teufelskanzel (Devil's Pulpit) and Hexenaltar (Witches' Altar). The peak is cloaked in fog for up to 300 days out of the year, and bitterly cold, which might have something to do with its devilish associations. The Brocken Spectre, a gigantic figure floating in the sky and surrounded by radiating circles of light, has haunted hikers for generations. This optical illusion has only added to the eerie atmosphere of the mountain, where according to lore, witches rode upon broomsticks and goats, gathering beside the stones upon Walpurgisnacht (30 April) to perform Satanic rituals. Inspired by the legend, 17th century playwright Goethe gave his infamous play *Faust* the backdrop of the Brocken, where the eponymous Faust sells his soul to the devil. Today, many Germans celebrate spring's spooky Walpugis Night in a similar fashion to Halloween.

> *"The Brocken spectre, a gigantic figure floating in the sky... has haunted hikers for generations"*

The Dyatlov Pass

NOT SAFE TO TRAVEL!

Location: Kholat Syakhl Mountain, Northern Ural, Russia **Time zone:** UTC +5 **Currency:** Russian ruble

This spot upon the eastern slope of Kholat Syakhl, a place whose name translates as the ominous 'Dead Mountain', is where a party of nine highly experienced ski-hikers mysteriously died in 1959. It appeared they abandoned their skis and ran barefoot and half clothed into the wilderness in different directions. Five of the party were determined to have died from hypothermia, but four suffered substantial skull injuries, chest fractures and, horrifyingly, two were missing their eyes – one, her tongue too. While the deaths were blamed on a "compelling natural force" many question what caused nine fit, young, experienced hikers to meet such a bizarre fate? Theories into what really happened range from an avalanche, hypothermic paradoxical undressing and a freak hurricane to conspiracies involving government experiments gone wrong, indigenous tribal attacks and even UFOs and a Russian Yeti. Today, you can venture to this now infamous patch of the Northern Ural Mountains and hike it for yourself – and why not stop by nearby village Ivdel – a so-called epicentre of UFO activity.

Nahanni National Park Reserve

Location: Dehcho Region, Northwest Territories, Canada
Time zone: UTC-7
Currency: Canadian dollar

This impressive UNESCO World Heritage Site, known as "The Valley of the Headless Men", can only be accessed by floatplane or boat. At the turn of the 20th century, two brothers were lured into the mountain range thanks to the promise of gold, but their second venture from Alberta proved to be fatal – the duo's skeletons were found three years later, decapitated beside the edge of a river. The valley in which they were discovered has ever since been known as Deadmen Valley, its river earning the moniker Headless Creek. Another prospector was also found decapitated over a decade later and Royal Canadian Mounted Police have indicated there have been others who have met similar fates, with numerous folks vanishing entirely. As well as missing people (and heads), the mountain range has seen a number of mysterious plane crashes – leading to the range earning a second nickname, the Funeral Range. If that's not sinister enough, more recently the Nahanni has been subject to numerous UFO sightings, evidence of Bigfoot activity and even whispers of an extinct predatory bear-dog hybrid, the Amphicyonidae, still lurking in the valleys, despite officially dying off over two million years ago.

Bodmin Moor

Location: **Cornwall, England, UK** *Time zone:* **UTC**
Currency: **Pound sterling**

Bleak, heather-strewn, and swamped with bogs, Bodmin Moor commands fear and awe. Its history and legends include Bronze Age hut circles and cairns, the mighty "giant's house" of Trethevy Quoit, and the precarious Cheesewring, allegedly the result of a struggle between giants and saints. In 1844, 18-year-old servant Charlotte Dymond was found near the stream below Rough Tor, her jealous suitor allegedly having slit her throat, and today she roams the moor in her Sunday best. The Beast of Bodmin Moor also can't be forgotten, or it might come for your livestock. Locals swear the large, panther-like creature exists, with 60 sightings/slayings since the 1970s. More chilling is Jan Tregeagle, who sold his soul to Satan for riches and whose unruly spirit travails on gloomy nights, luring wanderers to their deaths. Having paid priests to protect him, he was safe until his resurrection, when his ghost was doomed to eternally complete impossible tasks. If he stops, the devil will claim him, so Tregeagle toils away, bemoaning his fate.

Dozmary Pool, bursting with myth

A small lake on Bodmin Moor, Dozmary Pool harbours the Old Storm Woman, a ghostly moorland mermaid who whips the water into wind before flinging it out across the moor. Dozmary is also where Tregeagle howls the loudest, bound to empty the bottomless pool with a leaky limpet shell.

Pendle Hill

Location: **Lancashire, England, UK** *Time zone:* **UTC 0**
Currency: **Pound sterling**

Once home to wild boar, ancient woodland, and wolves, now Pendle Hill is steeped in mystery, bewitched by the legacy of 1612. In the 17th century, Europe was in the claws of witch-hunting mania, and in England, this peaked in Pendle. In 1612, Alison Device confessed to asking the devil to curse a pedlar, and members of her family and its rivals were rounded up and taken to trial. All but one were found guilty of murder by sorcery, plus a baloney plot to blow up Lancaster Castle, and hanged. Boasting about meeting the devil in a quarry won't have helped, but the "witches" were most likely wrongly convicted due to reputation wars between the Chattoxes and Demdikes, which revolved around healing and/or black magic. They haunt the villages in the shadow of Pendle Hill, where visitors report sudden intense rage, ghostly whispers, unexplainable scratches, and even being choked, while locals dread the apparitions darting around the hill at night.

James I, a disciple of bias

Although England held witch trials for 300 years, only 500 "witches" were hanged, making the Pendle 11 a mammoth 2 per cent at once. At the time, James I, who loathed witchcraft, was on the throne. He made the Witchcraft Act of 1604 one of his first laws.

Salisbury Plain

Location: **Wiltshire, England, UK** *Time zone:* **UTC**
Currency: **Pound sterling**

Stonehenge, the mysterious, stupendous neolithic stone circle erected around 2,500 BCE, is undoubtedly the Plain's claim to fame, but the land has more to offer.

Case in point: the lost village of Imber. Permanently evacuated in 1943 so troops could prepare for D-Day, laughter and chatter echo after dark near the old pub, the scent and warmth of log fires drift on the air, and buildings ring with the clang of Albert Nash's (the village blacksmith who, post-evacuation, died of a broken heart) hammer and anvil. Further afield, the Flying Highwayman Thomas Boulter, hanged in the 1770s, rides at breakneck speed across the Plain before vanishing into the mist. Meanwhile in Salisbury Cathedral, the noose which hung Lord Stourton sometimes reappears over his grave, where it was left after his execution, and whenever a bishop of Salisbury is dying (officially documented in 1911), white, dazzling, albatross-like birds fly without flapping their wings, or perch on the cathedral's spire. These aren't the most horrific, tortured phantoms, but they do make you want to explore the history of Salisbury Plain.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

The Himalayas

Location: **Mahalangur Himal, Nepal/ Tibet** *Time zone:* **UTC+5:45** *Currency:* **Nepalese rupee**

What links Alexander the Great, Sir Edmund Hillary and James Stewart's wife's sock compartment? They all had a part in trying (and failing) to stow away evidence for the existence of the Yeti, aka the Abominable Snowman. This smaller, longer-haired cousin of the American Bigfoot has been spotted throughout the Himalayan border nations. Unlike Bigfoot, however, Asian folk history warns that this is not a cuddly creature: a cryptid has got to eat, and a human passerby is as good a meal as any. Good places to start a Yeti-related trip would include the International Mountain Museum in Pokhara, Nepal, before scaling (via Nepal's Yeti Airways) the heights of the Mahalangur Himal region where some of the spine-chilling sightings of this (and other ghostly mountain phantoms) unfolded. It's also home to a monastery where you can see a Yeti claw and scalp. But given the sheer size (and hazardous nature) of the Yetis' stomping grounds, official tours are recommended.

Roswell

Location: **New Mexico, USA**
Time zone: **UTC-7**
Currency: **US Dollar**

Ever happened upon a secret and then failed miserably to keep it? That pretty much sums up what happened at Roswell in the 1950s when a disc-shaped object (initially confirmed as a "flying saucer" before the story was retracted) appeared in a supposed alien crash near the town. Still, if the residents of the town at one point felt ill-treated by that web of (some say) lies, they've certainly made the most of the mysterious situation since. Roswell is packed with alien-related tourism that ranges from the serious to the outright silly. From the International UFO Museum, to The flying-saucer shaped Alien Caffeine Espresso Bar and fast-food chain, Roswell may be the UFOlogy tourism capital of the world.

Area 51 and the UFO Highway

Location: **100 miles north of Las Vegas, USA**
Time zone: **UTC -8** *Currency:* **US dollar**

What do the US government keep at Area 51 that they don't want us Earthlings to find out? It's a mystery that's intrigued many a UFOlogist for years. This desert spot (seems like aliens apparently love these dusty locales) is more than just another military base; it's a codeword for secrecy and intrigue. Many believe that the relics from the Roswell "extraterrestrial crash site" (alongside, it's claimed, non-human corpses found in the area) were transplanted here. Unless you have high-level security clearance, there's little chance most of us will find out (and tourists are warned from entering, in all seriousness, in the strongest terms – it's closely guarded by armed personnel). On the upside, the less discreetly-named Extraterrestrial Highway running past the area, on the road north from Las Vegas boasts fun attractions like the Little A'Le'Inn (pronounced Little Alien), the Alien Research Centre (museum and gift shop) and even the E.T. Fresh Jerky shop.

ENTERING
AREA
51

Harrison Hot Springs

Location: **British Columbia, Canada** *Time zone:* **UTC -7**
Currency: **Canadian dollar**

Sasquatch – the red-eyed, human-faced, gorilla-like creature who has been sighted across North America since ancient times – is comparatively outgoing among cryptids; polls show that many Canadians would not be surprised to bump into one while changing their tyre on a forest drive. The hairy humanoid may well be just a hitherto undocumented primate, some say. For members of the Sts' ailes tribe, however – in whose drawings he's popped up for thousands of years – the truth is more complex. They believe Sasquatch is more than just an animal but a physical manifestation of our Earth, a shapeshifter who comes and goes at will.

To take a punt at spotting him, get yourself down to Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia and the adjacent Sasquatch National Park. Visit the town's Sasquatch Museum, before heading out on a locally-run Sasquatch tour or hike. It's also been said that the Sasquatch gather once a year for their own 'meeting'. But for those not invited, a June festival celebrating the phenomena is a great alternative.

RESORT MUNICIPALITY
HARRISON HOT SPRINGS
WELCOMES YOU

Point Pleasant

Location: **West Virginia, USA** *Time zone:* **UTC -5**
Currency: **US dollar**

Curses, winged creatures with hypnotic eyes and mysterious visits from men in black, Point Pleasant's history is anything but pleasant! Things didn't get off to a great start for this unassuming riverside town when, in 1774, beloved Shawnee warrior Cornstalk, his son and two other tribe members were executed by Revolutionary War fighters while carrying out a peace offering. Cornstalk is said to have cursed the new settlement and it has suffered floods, fires, plane crashes, bridge collapses and freak lightning, ever since. And there's more… In the 1960s, the town saw a spate of weird sightings of the Mothman, a human-like creature with wings,who terrorised rooftops, cars and pedestrians. Add in reports of visits from federal agents to 'hush' witnesses and one thing's for sure, the Mothman Museum and yearly Mothman Festival is a feast for fans of the freaky!

Hessdalen

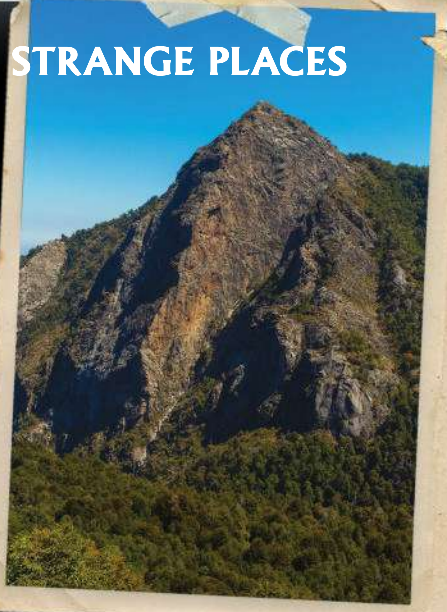
Location: **Two hours southeast of Trondheim, Norway**
Time zone: **UTC+1**
Currency: **Norwegian krone**

Fancy combining some UFO-spotting served with a side order of cutting-edge science? Hessdalen might be the spot for you. For more than a century, villagers in this quiet ex-mining valley were noticing something incredible on a semi-regular basis: bright, glimmering orbs in the sky, shooting in unpredictable directions… So far, so spooky, but little was made of the tales. Then in the 1980s, the activity reached a peak (10 to 20 reports per week) and the world took note. Scientists got their thinking caps on. Was it a case of the earth belching ionized gas? Decaying radon? Piezo-electricity? Or extraterrestrials?

While the sightings have since diminished to a dozen times per year, there's still more than enough locally to keep you on your toes: a "UFO camp" featuring cabins with recently added glass roofs; a minibus tour and 2-day hikes into the mountains and a UFO-themed pub (open seasonally) to warm your cockles after all that gawping at the sky.

> *"Fancy combining some UFO-spotting with a side of cutting-edge science?"*

Image source: Getty; Alamy



Wycliffe Well

Location: Barkly Tableland, Northern Territory, Australia
Time zone: UTC+9:30 Currency: Australian dollar

The Australian Outback: a place of heightened senses, higher temperatures and apparently a higher than average likelihood of spotting visitors from out of this world. This spot became known for its alien activity when soldiers were posted here during World War 2, with spine-tingling tales scribbled in a logbook kept for decades at the local roadhouse. An entrepreneur in the 1980s saw the potential for livening up this desert outpost and invested a reported $4m Australian dollars in a micro-'resort'. Subsequent neglect has given the place extra spook-factor, but if you find yourself heading down the lonely road south to Alice Springs, stick your head around the door – and keep your eyes peeled!

Chile's UFO trail

Location: San Clemente and surrounding area
Time zone: UTC-4
Currency: Chilean peso

What's the best terrain for an extraterrestrial landing? Sadly we can't get one on the phone for a chat. However the tourist board of Chile think the area of San Clemente, nestled in the Andes mountains with its landscape of smooth, odd rock formations, ticks the right boxes. That's why it's been declared Chile's official UFO trail. It's not just that the west coast of the continent has a long history of folklore surrounding human contact with UFOs (like the Nascar Lines site, further north in Peru). But the number of sightings here has been significant – from bright lights dipping into mountain lakes to actual humanoids strolling around the town – so the likelihood of your own encounter is non-zero. Add in that it's one of the most stunning landscapes on Earth and it seems the UFOs have a great nose for travel too.

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Navajo Nation

Location: New Mexico, USA Time zone: UTC-7 Currency: US dollar

The Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation in the US, spanning northeastern Arizona, northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah and is home to the Navajo tribe who have occupied the area for hundreds of years. This area of desertland is policed by the Navajo Rangers, who take paranormal cases just as seriously as their regular investigations – which is just as well, as the landscape has experienced high levels of supernatural activity, from legendary monsters to ghosts and UFOS – although their federal training didn't quite prepare them for such an array of unearthly phenomenon. Sightings of UFOs – often in the form of strange orbs of light – are common on the reservation. Coins often fall from the sky in the most haunted locations and Bigfoot has even been spotted. But the most fearsome of all the paranormal encounters are the reports of Skinwalkers – shape-shifting evil witches who, according to the nation's retired rangers, no doubt exist. What's more, the rangers theorise that the supernatural activity is all linked, and related to the Navajo origin story. Navajo Nation is private, Federal Indian Land, and you must request and be approved for a permit issued by the Navajo Parks and Recreation Department to visit. On top of this, make sure you treat the landscape and Navajo beliefs with utmost respect.

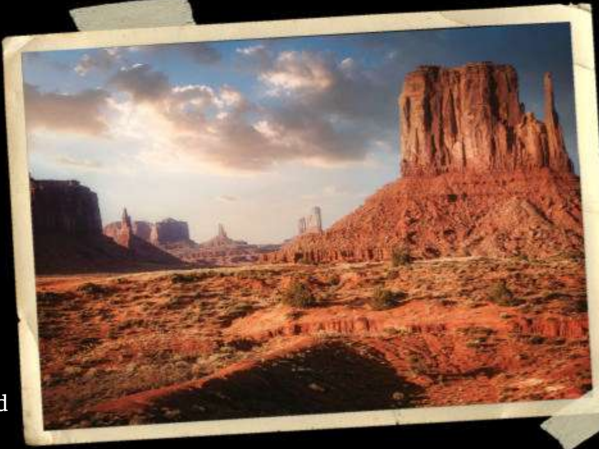
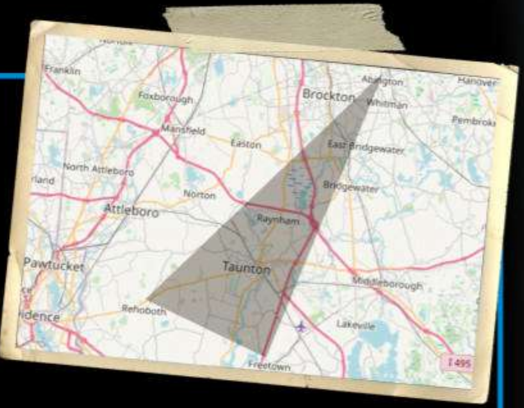


Image source: Getty; Alamy



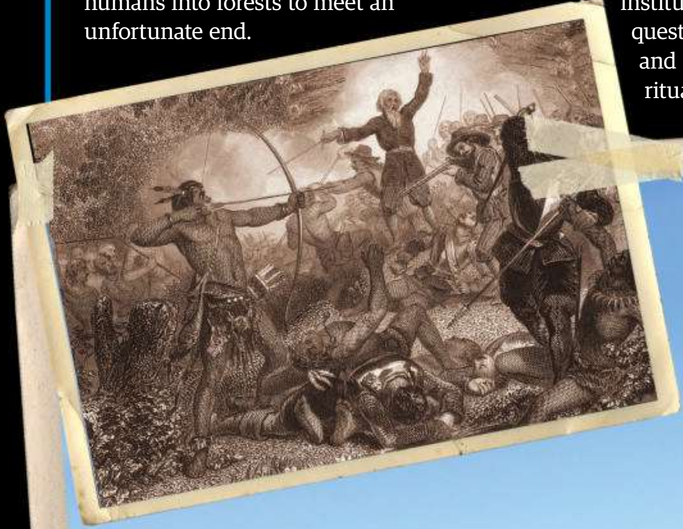
The Bridgewater Triangle

Location: **Massachusetts, USA**
Time zone: **UTC-5** *Currency:* **US dollar**

The land equivalent of the infamous Bermuda Triangle sea area, the Bridgewater Triangle is a 200 square mile area of Southwestern Massachusetts between Abington, Freetown and Rehoboth. It's a magnet for paranormal activity ranging from UFOs and supernatural humanoids to non-native animal sightings and abnormally large, vicious hounds. The land is reputed to be cursed due to a revered object, the wampum belt, being lost during King Philip's War (1675-1678), the conflict between the colonists and their indigenous allies, the Wampanoag. The Wampanoag told tales of folkloric creatures named pukwudgies who made the area their home. These porcupine-backed goblins often lure humans into forests to meet an unfortunate end. You might spot one in Freetown-Fall River State Forest – the site of numerous murders, reported Satanic cult activity (including animal sacrifice) and misfortunes – or near Lake Nippenicket in Hockomock Swamp (Wampanoag for "where spirits dwell"). Colonial settlers dubbed this vegetated freshwater wetland "Devil's Swamp". At the very centre of the paranormal vortex, it's rife with supernatural activity from phantom fires and "spook lights" to roaming spectres, indigenous cryptids like Thunderbirds (gigantic pterodactyl-like birds) and even the notorious Bigfoot.

Murderer Lizzie Borden's house is located within the Bridgewater Triangle, as is Taunton State Hospital, a psychiatric institution that performed many questionable experiments on patients and supposedly conducted Satanic rituals in the basement, where strange markings can be seen. The hospital also treated at least two murderers – Anthony Santo, who killed two of his cousins and a six-year-old girl, and Honora "Jolly Jane" Toppan, a psychotic nurse and prolific serial killer, who admitted to getting an erotic thrill from holding her victims while they died. Unsurprisingly, the hospital is a hotbed of paranormal activity.

In Rehoboth, the historic one-room schoolhouse, Hornbine School, built in 1862, now functions as a museum, but it also has its fair share of ghostly activity, and Route 44 is haunted by a red-headed, flannel-clad hitchhiker. Over in Bridgewater itself, Bridgewater State University is also rumoured to be riddled with ghosts, in particular Woodward Hall.



Ghosts & hauntings

72 Ghostlore

Ghosts and apparitions have haunted the imagination worldwide for centuries, and can scare or offer comfort to the living

82 Investigating the paranormal

Hunting for evidence of ghosts became a fascination for paranormal investigators as recording technology advanced

86 The Enfield Poltergeist

In 1970s London, an unexplained and evil entity began to to terrorise an ordinary family in a notorious poltergeist case

88 The haunted house

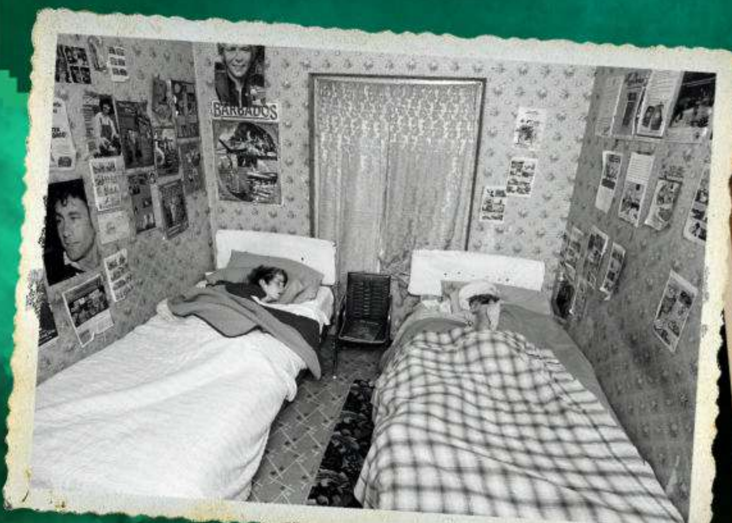
The idea of the haunted house crosses cultural boundaries, but what is it that fascinates us about these buildings?

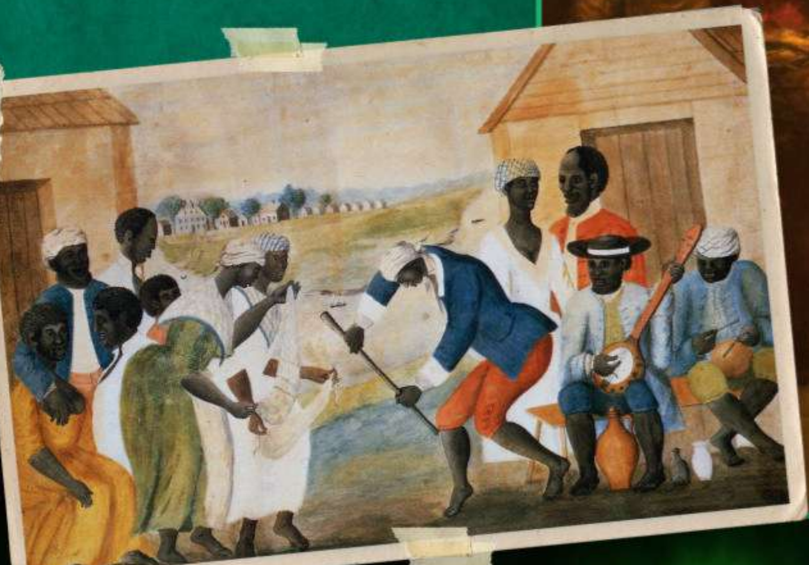
92 The Dodleston messages

During the 1980s, a sleepy British village became the scene of a bizarre situation involving a BBC Micro computer

94 Haint misbehavin'

The African-American Gullah Geechee community's ghostlore has its roots in West Africa but informs Southern USA folk traditions too





YES
NO
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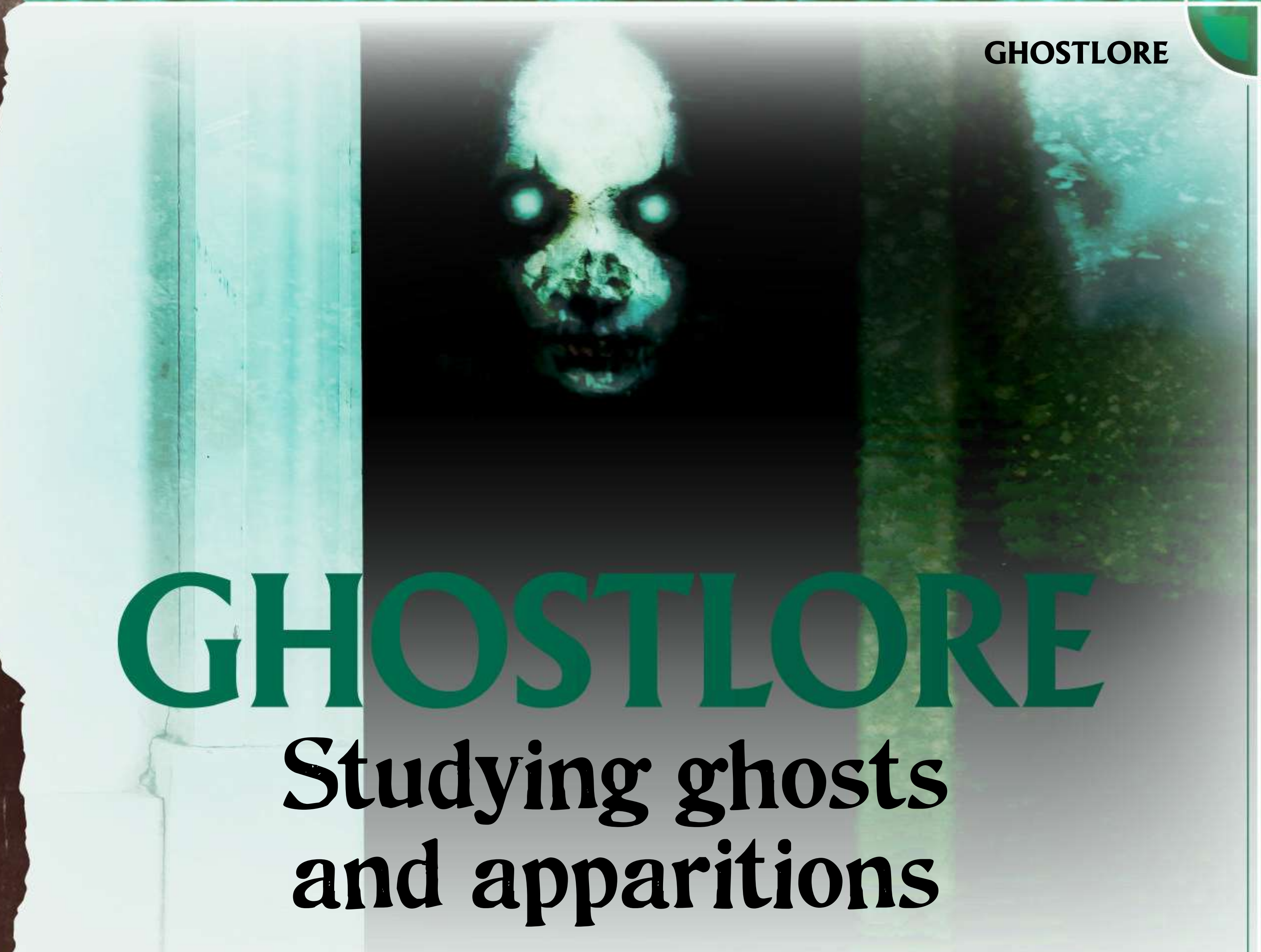
Ghost beliefs go back even before the dawn of recorded history

Image source: Getty Images



GHOSTLORE

Studying ghosts and apparitions

Ghosts are a worldwide, if otherworldly, phenomenon that can scare or comfort – and may offer us clues about the nature of our reality

Written by Ben Gazur

Of all the humans who have ever lived, only a fraction are alive now. Behind all of us lurk the ghosts of dozens of people who have passed on into death. For those that are left behind we can see reflections of them in all the places they used to haunt in life. For some spirits, though, it seems as if haunting memories are insufficient - sometimes the dead are said to come back as ghosts.

Tales of ghosts and ghost-sightings can be found in almost every culture and across the millennia. As soon as writing was invented people began to set down their beliefs regarding the afterlife and those who sometimes returned from it. Why some spirits seem unable to rest in the hereafter is a question just as old as the appearance of ghosts themselves. Ghostlore - the folklore of ghosts - can provide examples of vengeful ghosts, mournful phantoms, and tender spirits unable to give up on their loved ones. From the ancient to the modern world, people across the globe have claimed to have been visited by ghosts.

Indeed, despite being dead, ghosts are not just a thing of the past. One 2019 poll found that 45 per cent of Americans believe in their existence. For all that rationality has sought to banish spectres and bogeymen from our lives, there seems to be something in our minds that cannot accept that death is the end. How can we square our materialist understanding of the universe with one that is inhabited by ghosts?

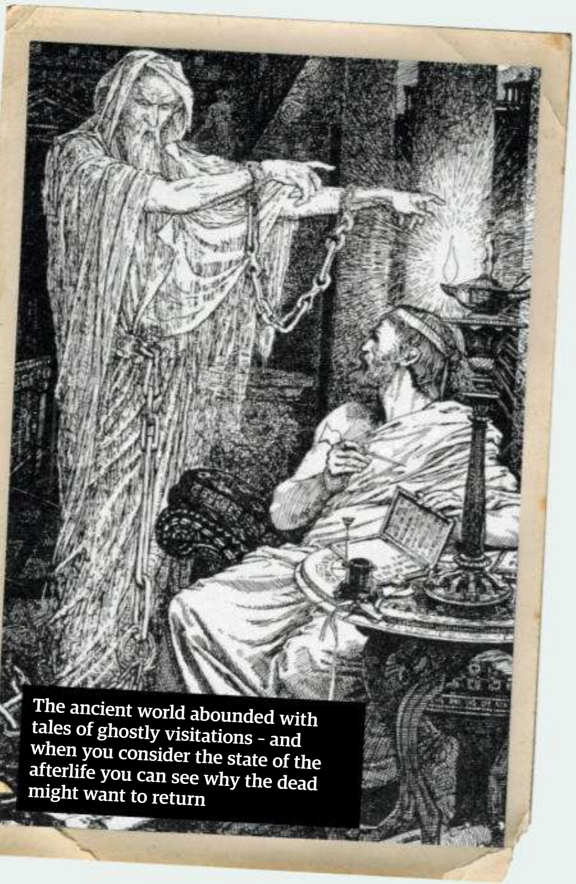
Mythology and religion have both found ways to explain the idea of ghosts. Scientific study has also been used to both examine and debunk claims of ghostly activity. For the open-minded explorer into ghostlore, however, the best method of understanding ghosts is to examine the evidence for yourself.

> *"For some spirits, though, it seems as if haunting memories are insufficient – sometimes the dead are said to come back as ghosts"*

Images: Getty

Ghosts in the ancient world

In antiquity, ghosts were an accepted part of the natural order – given ancient notions of the afterlife their return was all too understandable



The ancient world abounded with tales of ghostly visitations - and when you consider the state of the afterlife you can see why the dead might want to return

The civilisations of Mesopotamia provide us with some of our earliest literary sources. From their cuneiform tablets we get to see how they viewed death. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written around 1800 BCE, is a tale steeped in death. When the hero Gilgamesh witnesses his friend Enkidu die he suddenly realises that he too will one day die. Death and the nature of the afterlife have fascinated humans from the beginning.

When we consider how the Sumerians viewed the afterlife, though, it is hardly surprising that Gilgamesh did not wish to go there. It was a dark and dreary place where the souls of people continued to exist as shades. In a story known as *Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Netherworld* we are told how the shades of the dead are kept happy by grave offerings and prayers left by their living family. The man who has only one son "weeps bitterly" while the man with seven sons performing rituals after is "as a companion of the gods." Meanwhile, the woman who never gave birth to any children is unflatteringly described as "Like a... pot, she is thrown away violently."

Performing the proper rites for the dead was a method of keeping shades content in many early religions. In ancient Egypt there was a well defined road that a soul travelled along passing from birth, to death, to the afterlife. As long as the soul of the departed was treated with respect it could expect a quiet and blessed eternity. The provision of grave goods, a decorated tomb, and a well-preserved body ensured the dead would be happy with their lot.

When a tomb was disturbed or a body looted then the shade could return to the Earth as a ghost. Even a family skimping on money and providing a cheap burial could be cause for a spirit to return to haunt the living. One man thought his illness was caused by the ghost of his dead wife. He wrote a letter to her shade and deposited it in her tomb describing all the things he did for her in life and the lengths he went to to give a decent burial. "But what thou

Defining moment

Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld

18th century BCE

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* from ancient Mesopotamia provides the earliest literary view of the afterlife and ghosts. Gilgamesh is horrified by the idea of dying and seeks to live forever. He fails. In one version of the tale his friend Enkidu willingly goes to the Netherworld but is trapped there, unable to return. The Netherworld of the Mesopotamians was not an enviable one. The dead lived a pale imitation of life there.

A history of ghosts

~1500 BCE

- **Tomb raiders**
Despite the Egyptian afterlife being a paradise it was known that the improperly buried could return to vex the living. Individuals could sicken and die if a vengeful ghost had reason to curse them.
~1500 BCE

~1400 BCE

- **The dead don't die**
Some of the earliest texts of Chinese literature, recorded as soon as writing developed, concerned ghosts and restless spirits. The proper burial of the deceased was of grave concern if you wanted their souls to pass on peacefully.
~1400 BCE

8TH CENTURY BCE

- **Heroic ghosts**
In the Homeric epics of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ghosts and spirits frequently appear. The afterlife is a gloomy abode where souls flutter around like bats and only blood offerings can induce them to talk.
8th century BCE

472 BCE

- **Persian ghosts**
The oldest surviving Greek tragedy is *The Persians* by Aeschylus and features the ghost of King Darius as a character. Summoned up from the dead, Darius' spirit rebukes his living family for their hubris.
472 BCE

2ND CENTURY CE

- **The first sceptics**
Belief in ghosts seems to have been universal in the ancient world. The first text expressing doubt was written by Lucian and explains how the philosopher Democritus would hide in graveyards to scare people out of believing in ghosts.
2nd century CE

hast done to me is to have laid hands on me although I had nothing wicked to thee."

In one Egyptian text a priest of Amun called Khonsemhab meets with the spirit of a man called Nebusemekh. Nebusemekh has a problem. His tomb has crumbled away and he no longer receives offerings as no one knows where he is buried. The priest promises to locate it and build a new one for him but Nebusemekh has his doubts – apparently the ghost has heard similar promises before from people he haunts.

For the Chinese, respect for ancestors was vital if you were to benefit from their aid. A displeased dead relative could perform all sorts of mischief. If the burial was performed incorrectly then a dead person would not be as gone as you might expect. The dead might call to anyone for help, however. In one tale a young girl's spirit visits a family and causes so much commotion that they stuff her ghost into a bag and toss it down a well. The next night she reappears and the same happens. It is only when the family carve out a log and place her spirit in it that she is satisfied with her burial and passes on into the afterlife.

Ancient Greek religion of the pre-classical age had no glorious afterlife. In the *Odyssey* the hero Odysseus meets with Achilles, who had shone so brightly in life. When Odysseus tries to comfort the poor shade of the dead Achilles he is told "By god, I'd rather slave on Earth for another man – some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive – than rule down here over all the breathless dead." For later Greeks and Romans there were mystery cults that offered the dead a way to a better afterlife, but even then their baleful shades could come back to the world of the living. Pliny the Younger described how a man named Athenodorus visited a haunted house in Athens. Interested in the ghost he stayed up all night with a lamp. He heard the ghost rattling chains and eventually saw him. When he followed the ghost into the garden he noted the spot where the spirit vanished. The next day he had the spot dug up and a skeleton, still draped in chains, was located. Given a fitting burial, the ghost was never seen again.

The Hebrew Bible is surprisingly quiet on the matter of what happens to us after death. However in the Book of 1 Samuel, King Saul is faced with a mighty army of Philistines. The prophet Samuel who might have advised him is dead and Saul does not know how to overcome his enemies. To contact Samuel the king goes to a magical woman, the Witch of Endor, who is able to summon up the ghost of the prophet. The words of the ghost are of little comfort to Saul but they do offer us a glimpse of mediumship in the ancient world.

The classical view of ghosts and spirits as pale shades came to an end with the rise of of Christianity as a world-straddling religion. The Christian afterlife was an altogether more jolly affair for departed souls than the gloomy fields awaiting dead Greeks and Romans. Yet even the followers of Jesus had their concerns about ghosts. After the resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel of Luke tells us that the disciples who saw him were afraid because they thought he was a ghost. Jesus has to convince them he really is back from the dead by telling them "It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

THE GHOST IN THE BATHHOUSE

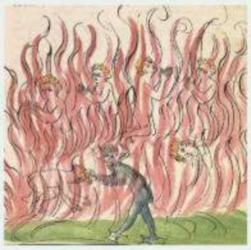
A handsome youth who turned to crime and was killed in a Roman public bath

The Greek historian Plutarch writing in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE described the situation that led to a bathhouse becoming home to a terrifying spectre. It all started when a Roman army captain came to town in Chaeroneia. He took a fancy to a local youth of surpassing beauty named Damon, and did everything in his power to seduce the boy. Damon refused the advances but feared the captain would turn violent if rejected too often. Damon and some friends gathered together one night and murdered the Roman captain and several of his colleagues.

When Damon was condemned to death for his crime he slew the town council too. Damon and the gang took to robbing in the countryside. Something had to be done. The town invited Damon back, begging his forgiveness. When Damon entered the bathhouse to clean himself, the townsfolk killed him. Plutarch tells us that afterwards spectres were seen in the baths and terrible groans heard. Eventually the bathhouse was walled up. Even 200 years later in Plutarch's time, however, the place was said to still echo with the eldritch moans of the murdered Damon.

Defining moment

Purgatory 12th century CE



Ghosts were hard for Christians to accept as they seem to be outside of God's plan of placing people eternally in heaven or hell. The popular belief in a third place, a fiery purgatory where sins were burned away before people went to heaven, became accepted Church doctrine. The souls of those in purgatory were thought to be able to visit the living. Pope Gregory the Great said that people who saw ghosts should offer masses for the sake of the dead person's soul. Prayers could speed people out of purgatory and towards eternal peace.

Defining moment

The Fox sisters 1848 CE

While many claimed to have contacted the dead before, a mania for spiritualist séances began in 1848 when the young Fox sisters of New York reported hearing rapping noises caused by ghosts. By asking questions and listening for knocking replies, the girls were able interpret the dead. Soon séances were taking place across the United States and Europe. Even after the Fox sisters admitted they had perpetrated a fraud, many continued to believe in the power of mediums. Spiritualism became an accepted belief for many and continues to this day.

1487 CE

- **Hammer of the Witches**
  Widespread belief in spirits, demons, and ghosts broke out into fear of witchcraft in the Middle Ages. A book, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of the Witches*) was written to guide people on how to recognise witches and spirits.
  1487 CE

16TH CENTURY CE

- **Necromancy**
  Renaissance magicians like John Dee and Edward Kelley believed that the spirits of the dead could be called forth at will. Such ghosts could be used to gain arcane wisdom or perform magical feats.
  16th century CE

1914 CE

- **Angels of Mons**
  During the Battle of Mons a force of angelic bowmen was said to be seen fighting on the side of the British. Others claimed it was St George, or the spirits of dead soldiers.
  1914 CE

20TH CENTURY CE

- **Ghosts or aliens**
  Ghostly lights have been reported throughout the centuries but in the 20th century unexplained lights began to be attributed to alien spaceships instead of luminous ghosts. Still unexplained, these UFOs continue to be reported.
  20th century CE

Images: Getty

The haunted ages

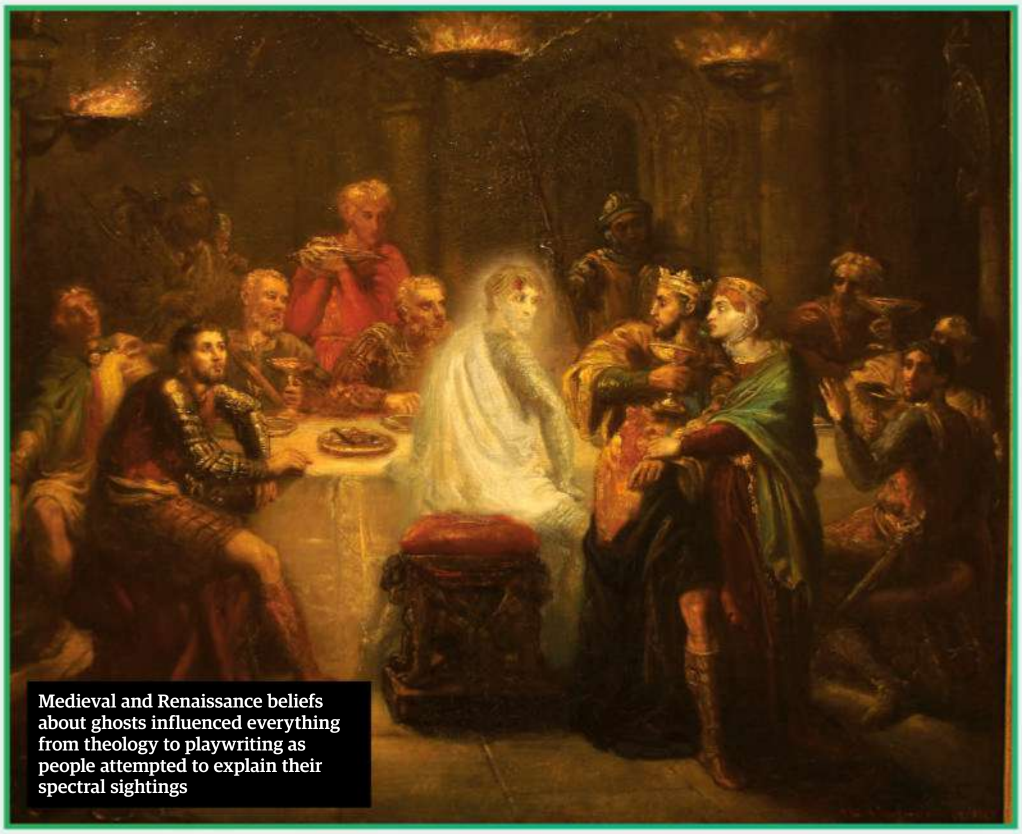
The coming of Christianity left people seeking an explanation for how it was souls continued to visit the Earth with such spooky regularity

Bernado: Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.

Horatio: Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

So begins the visitation by the ghost of the king of Denmark in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Seen by multiple people on multiple occasions, this is presented as no figment of the imagination but a real haunting. As one witness says, "Before my God, I might not this believe, Without the sensible and true avouch, Of mine own eyes." We might think of medieval and Renaissance people as overly credulous but they knew how to weigh evidence just as well as we do - and they firmly believed in ghosts.

The medieval period in Europe was profoundly shaped by Christian belief. For some the idea of ghosts sat uncomfortably with that faith. God sat in judgement of all souls and the good went to heaven and the bad to hell. This seems to leave little room for ghosts, because how can the dead return to Earth if they have been consigned to an eternal afterlife by the almighty? Yet ghosts and hauntings persisted to be seen and believed in throughout Europe.



Medieval and Renaissance beliefs about ghosts influenced everything from theology to playwriting as people attempted to explain their spectral sightings

The Bible even instructed followers in how to interpret the ghosts they saw or heard of. "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." Though the ghostly apparition may be real, they were told, it might not really be who it appeared to be. A ghost could be a demon in disguise waiting to ensnare the unwary. Indeed, because ghosts seemed to be outside of God's divine plan, they were in all likelihood agents of the devil.

Even the great thinkers of the Church were said to have been visited by ghosts. St Thomas of Aquinas was visited by the spirit of a friend who had died, though Thomas did not know it yet. "I am, in fact, dead: but I have permission to visit you because of your merits." He was also said to have been visited by his dead sister who told him that she was in purgatory and was in need of his prayers to get into heaven.

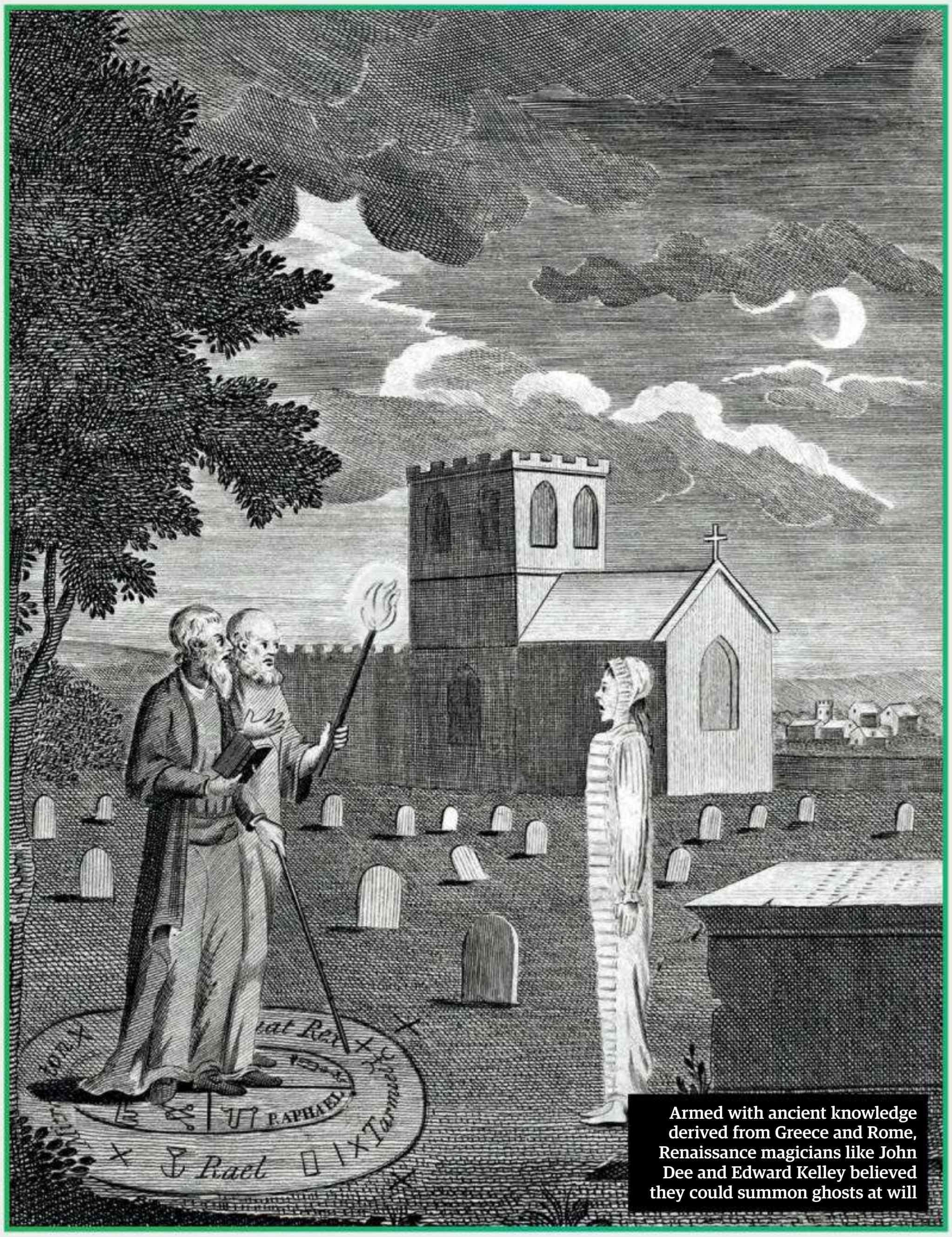
It was with the development of the idea of purgatory that ghosts became Christianised. By the end of the 12th century belief in a third place in the afterlife, purgatory, seemed to allow the wiggle room needed for ghosts to enter the world. Those in purgatory were souls who had not committed crimes serious enough for eternal punishment but still required purification of their sins before they could enter heaven. Perhaps ghosts were the spirits of those in purgatory, such as St Thomas' sister.

Some ghosts made clear reference to purgatory, such as the dark shadow of a mistress who visited her lover to tell him "I can be freed from the punishment I am suffering, if masses were said for me by good priests." One anonymous monk serving at Byland Abbey in Yorkshire in the 15th century wrote down several tales featuring ghosts:

"It happened that this man was talking with the master of the ploughmen and was walking with him in the field. And suddenly the master fled in great terror and the other man was left struggling with a ghost who foully tore his garments. And at last he gained the victory and conjured him. And he being conjured confessed that he had been a certain canon of Newburgh, and that he had been excommunicated for certain silver spoons which he had hidden in a certain place. He therefore begged the living man that he would go to the place he mentioned and take them away and carry them to the prior and ask for absolution. And he did so and he found the silver spoons in the place mentioned. And after absolution the ghost henceforth rested in peace."

The church profited from the belief in purgatory as money was often left for masses to be sung for the dead to speed them out of purgatory. Some people even set up chantries - buildings specifically funded for prayers and masses to be said for their souls.

The Renaissance saw a flourishing of European culture as a love for antiquity was rediscovered,



Armed with ancient knowledge derived from Greece and Rome, Renaissance magicians like John Dee and Edward Kelley believed they could summon ghosts at will

and people began to question the authorities that controlled them. It was still an age of deep faith, however, where people worried about what would become of them in the afterlife. Books describing how to die well and be reconciled with God quickly became best sellers. As can be seen from the ghosts in Shakespeare's plays, ghosts were still very much in the public imagination.

The Protestant Reformation, however, generally viewed purgatory with suspicion as few if any Biblical allusions are made to such a state. Many Protestants would view a ghost a clear work of the Devil. King James I of England, who was famously fearful of the supernatural, noted in his book *Daemonologie* how few ghosts were seen since the English church split with Roman Catholicism: "For as we know, moe Ghostes and spirites were seene, nor tongue can tell, in the time of blinde Papistrie in these Countries, where now by the contrarie, a man shall scarcely all his time here once of such things."

Yet even as the existence of ghosts suddenly lacked a clear theological backing they continued to be seen by many people. Renaissance magic took a keen interest in necromancy and the calling forth of spirits. Edward Kelley, who worked with Elizabeth I's advisor John Dee, claimed he could speak to the dead through a special stone. Folk traditions also held on to the existence of ghosts. Those who waited outside a church on St Mark's Eve (24 April) at midnight were believed to see a procession of ghosts – though they were, strictly, fetches: ghosts of those who'd die in the coming year.

THE WILD HUNT

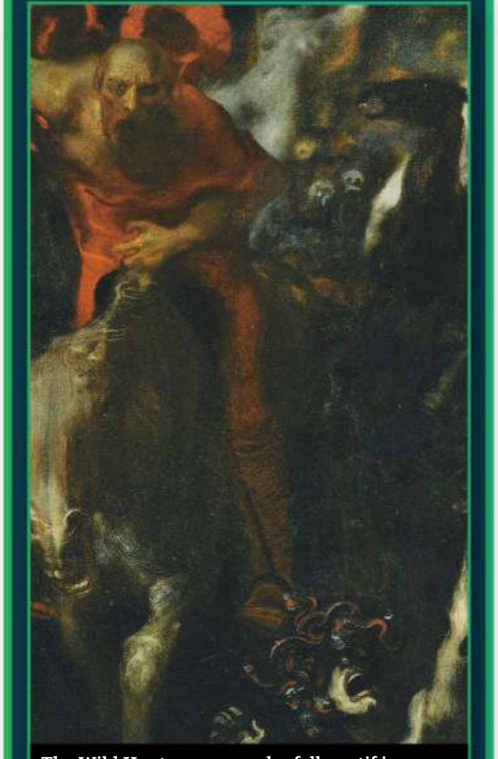
This riot of spectral horsemen and their hounds charge across the winter sky

Across Europe in the Middle Ages, many people reported a noisy group of ghosts and spirits that could sweep down on them out of nowhere. Known variously as the Wild Hunt, the Furious Army, and the Devil's Hunt, it was said that a cavalcade of spectres raising a horrible din would ride down those who happened to get in their way.

In the *Peterborough Chronicle* for 1127 a sighting of the Wild Hunt is recorded. "Many men both saw and heard a great number of huntsmen hunting. The huntsmen were black, huge, and hideous, and rode on black horses and on black he-goats, and their hounds were jet black, with eyes like saucers, and horrible."

In some versions these ghostly hunters were led by figures from pagan mythology, such as the Norse god Wodan. Over time, and with the loss of his followers to Christianity, the Norse god had become a figure of fear and devilry. At other times and in other places it was unclear whether the Wild Hunt was composed of demons or restless spirits.

Some thought that unbaptised children might form part of the company, while others thought that the hunters might be chasing down those who died without the grace of God.

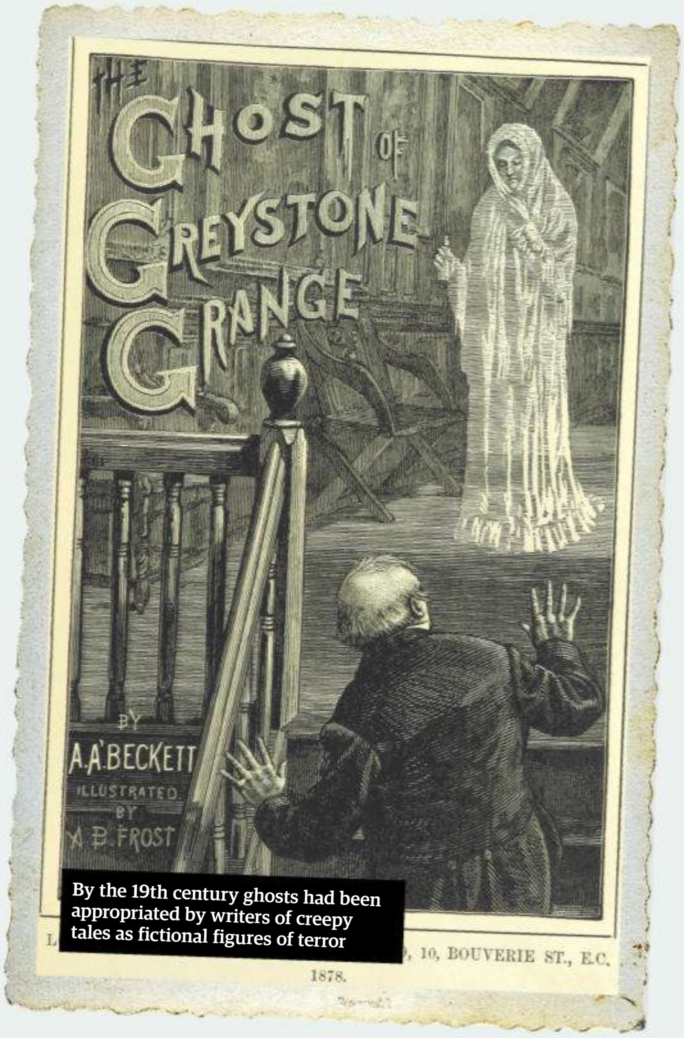


The Wild Hunt was a popular folk motif in many European countries, which gave birth to many myths related to these ghostly hunters

Images: Getty

An obsession with death

In an age when 'resurrection men' might dig up your corpse for anatomical study, there were those who feared the dead were escaping their graves in less physical form



By the 19th century ghosts had been appropriated by writers of creepy tales as fictional figures of terror

In 1681 a book called *Sadducismus Triumphatus* was published that scoffed at those sceptics who denied witches and demons stalked the land. The publisher in his preface defended the accounts of ghosts included in the work, saying they "seemed very well attested and highly credible and… contain nothing but what is consonant to right Reason and sound Philosophy." In the witch hunts that proceeded it, and particularly in the Salem trials that were to follow, ghosts and spirits played a major role.

Because of the shy nature of ghosts, they sometimes only appeared to one person at a time. Even in a crowded courtroom a young girl might see the spectre of a witch that was visible to no one else present. On the evidence of that apparition alone, a person could be condemned to die.

The late 17th century was the last hurrah for the witch hunters, who soon found public opinion turning against their activities and charges of witchcraft being rejected by courts across Europe and America. The Age of Enlightenment that flourished in the 18th century saw intellectuals taking on more sceptical attitudes that mocked belief in witches and ghosts alike. The Deist intellectuals put their faith in a universe that ran like clockwork. They thought that a watchmaker God had started it running but had since stepped back, and no longer interfered with his creation. Ghosts then, if they existed, were simply part of the order of things. Learned men found themselves stuck between their theories and people's experiences. As Dr Johnson said: "It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; but all belief is for it."

> Despite the rise of science, the Victorian era featured an uptick in ghost beliefs across all social classes, fuelled in part by Gothic novels

Even as the philosophers tried to strip away the miraculous from biblical accounts of ghosts and apparitions, the bulk of Europe remained staunchly Christian. One thinker wrote that he believed in ghosts "by the respect of the Holy Scriptures, the testimony of the whole of antiquity, and the tradition of the Church."

Belief in the supernatural went hand in hand with religious belief, and folk culture was still vibrant in the more rural areas of the Continent – though people were less ready to believe everything. In 1737 in Aberdeenshire, Geordie Watt found his mother was tormenting him from beyond the grave. Her ghost would regularly appear to Watt and his brothers and "reveal several things to them for their temporal and eternal good, which they were to behove and do at their highest peril." The main thing that his mother's ghost insisted on was that Geordie marry his maid Tibbie Mortimer. Watt found this unusual so consulted his minister about what he should do. The minister accompanied Watt to his home and immediately saw the ghost just as it was described. "The appearance which first presented to his view was about the bulk of an ordinary woman, covered with white clean linen." So the minister decided to see if this was a real ghost "he made such a trial of the apparition as he thought agreeable to the principles of the Christian revelation and true philosophy" – that is to say, he hit it with a stick – and found that the ghost was actually Tibbie Mortimer herself.

With a better educated public willing to test the reality of ghosts, they began, paradoxically, to haunt people's imaginations more in literature.

> *"The Age of Enlightenment saw intellectuals taking on more sceptical attitudes that mocked belief in witches and ghosts alike"*

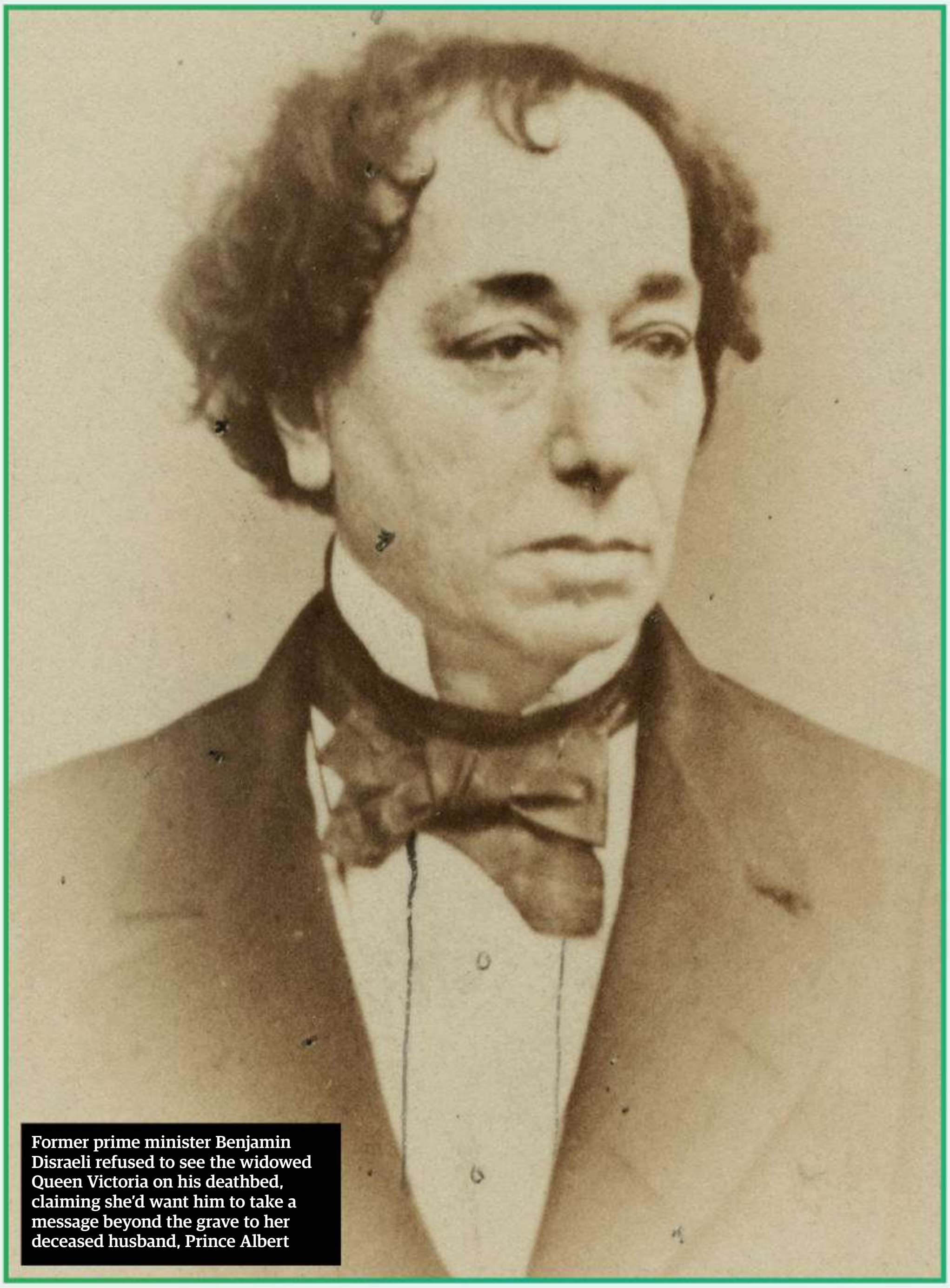
SCRATCHING FANNY OF COCK LANE

Comedic by name, but not by nature, this 'ghost' made a terrible accusation

One of the most infamous ghosts of the 18th century in Britain was one that haunted Cock Lane in London. When William Kent's wife Elizabeth died her sister Fanny moved into the family home to care for the widower. Soon the two became lovers and moved to Cock Lane to live as Mr and Mrs Kent in rooms rented from the Parsons family. When Fanny was pregnant and due to give birth she suddenly fell ill and died. Her spirit would not rest for long.

The daughters of the Parsons family began to hear noises near their bed at night. Scratching, as if a cat was hidden in the walls, left the family troubled. Soon suspicion fell on the unquiet ghost of Fanny and the legend of Scratching Fanny was born. Devising a system of knocking to communicate with the spirit, the Parsons were able to find out that Fanny had not died from smallpox but rather a lethal dose of arsenic given to her by her 'husband'.

The great and good of London society began to attend séances to speak to Fanny's ghost. Close examination of Elizabeth Parsons discovered a piece of wood she used to make the knocking sounds. Kent brought the Parsons family to court for blackening his name. All were found guilty and forced to pay a fine for their imposture.



Former prime minister Benjamin Disraeli refused to see the widowed Queen Victoria on his deathbed, claiming she'd want him to take a message beyond the grave to her deceased husband, Prince Albert

Gothic tales such as Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, which features a monstrously large and ghostly foot, became hugely popular. Science may be great for solving practical problems but for writers looking to scare or move readers it proved radically insufficient. As Walpole himself wrote, "A god, at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much senses."

The Victorian era saw a similar reaction against too much hard-nosed theorising. The age of Darwin's theory of evolution was also the age of Dickens and his popular Christmas ghost stories. Despite scientists like Ferriar and Hibbert postulating that ghost sightings were simply caused by accidents in the brain and overstimulated optic nerves, people still desperately craved to hear and see their departed loved ones. Sentimentality was a hallmark of the 19th century.

The brooding figure of the widowed Queen Victoria still mourning her beloved Albert after decades fell heavily over British society. So keen was she to contact her dead husband that Disraeli on his deathbed is said to have refused to see her. He quipped "No, it is better not. She would only ask me to take a message to Albert." The Victorian obsession with death grew alongside the ornate graveyards that now dotted England with large and elaborate tombs. Whitby grew in large part because of the black jet mourning jewellery it produced.

It was just a short step from memorialising the departed to attempting to talk with them. Spiritualism, communicating directly with the dead, became popular following 1848, when the Fox sisters of New York claimed to have made contact with the spirits of the dead, who communicated through making rapping noises on their table. Their celebrity sparked a mania for spiritual mediums in many countries – even after the Fox sisters admitted it had been a hoax in 1888. But in an age when a simple cut could cause a fatal infection, infant mortality was high, and especially after the American Civil War, there were too many mourning people seeking comfort to ignore the call of mediumship. Ghosts could not be busted by science so easily.

Images: Getty

Modern day ghosts

Despite the best efforts of sceptics to debunk ghost sightings, many people even today claim to have been visited by those who have died

The 20th century saw both a pinnacle of scientific revolution and terrible mass slaughters of humanity. The discoveries of scientists and the theories of philosophers were wholly inadequate in the face of the scale of human suffering through world wars and holocausts. Ghosts and spiritualism made people feel connected to something outside this world of horror and tragedy.

The 20th century began with British newspapers still regularly reporting on ghostly apparitions. One 1904 case saw a manager of a Richmond inn bedevilled by a nightly visitor. Each night he would be awoken by unearthly sounds and lights shining in his face. “The ghost is a long luminous figure, dressed in some flimsy white and blue material.” The manager took a somewhat imperialist attitude to these spectral intrusions. “If I see it again I shall shoot at it.”

> Far from debunking ghost beliefs, 20th and 21st century technologies have been used to fuel the activities of mediums and ghost-hunters

The domestic ghost, however, seemed to be dying out in the first decades of the 20th century. It was the shock of the First World War that saw a renewed interest in spiritual matters. With every village across Europe suffering heavy losses in the numbers of their young men, bereft families wanted to know their loved ones were at peace. Mediums and spiritualists were once again in vogue. In America the Ouija board became a popular way to check up on soldiers fighting on another continent.

Soldiers found themselves faced with death every day and reported seeing many strange spectres in the trenches. Some popular visions such as the Angels of Mons, a ghostly battalion of archers fighting on the side of the British, were eagerly reported at home. Others were private visitations recorded in the diaries of those on the front lines.

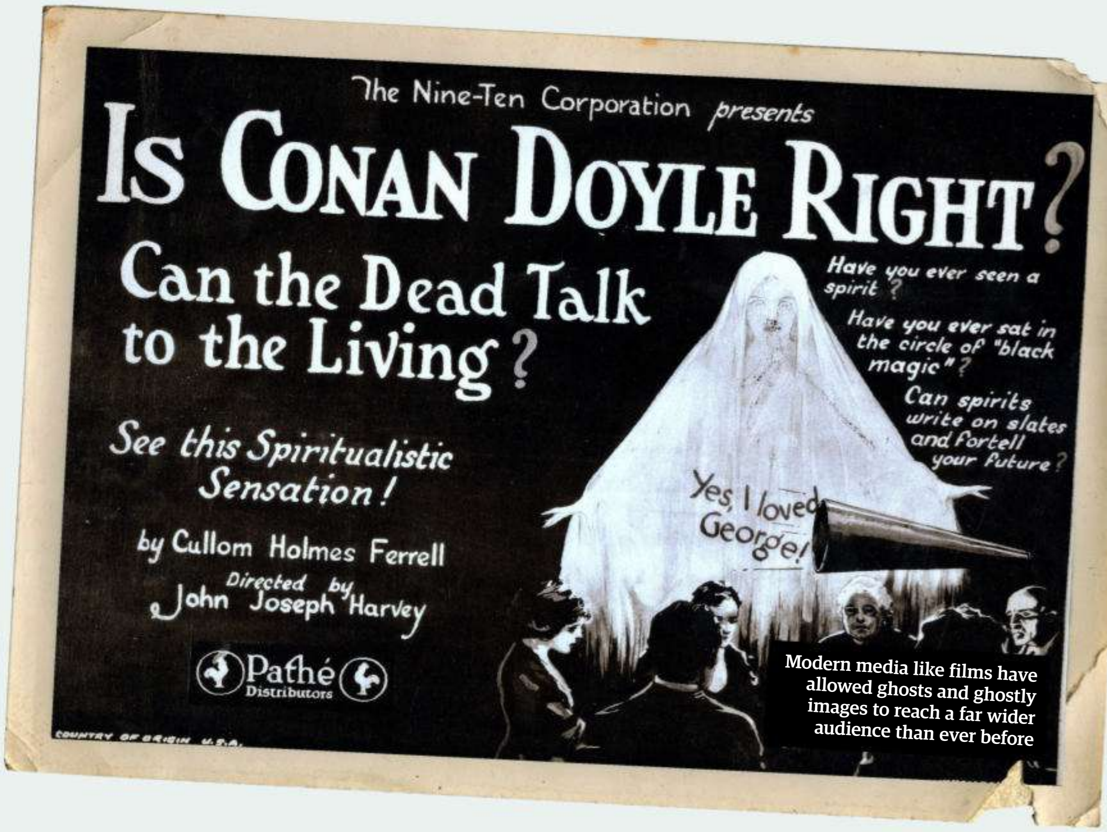
One Canadian soldier, Will Bird, described being woken by the ghost of his brother who had died two years before. “Steve grinned as he released my hands, then put his warm hand over my mouth as I started to shout my happiness.” Steve led his brother out of the shelter he had been slumbering in just as a shell obliterated the spot where he had been sleeping. Other ghost sightings had less happy endings. One British soldier saw a figure in a blue skirt and bonnet. Realising it was his dead mother he remarked “I believe she’s come for me.” A burst of shrapnel killed him on the spot.

The Second World War also left terrible spiritual scars in many places that have spawned a host of ghostly legends. Pilots reported seeing unusual planes during the war and even as late as 2015 in Derbyshire people have spotted Second World War planes crossing the sky - often silently, when planes of that era made a deafening roar. The Dominican Hill Retreat in the Philippines became the headquarters of a Japanese army unit who committed horrific crimes within its walls. It is perhaps unsurprising that it has gained a reputation for paranormal activity.

The 20th century has seen the application of science to the study of ghosts as never before. Spirit photography had begun in the Victorian era and allowed ghosts to be seen by many more people than had ever actually done so. Ectoplasm spooling out of mediums’ mouths as they communicated with the dead became a popular image of Spiritualism. Even as some cases were unmasked as frauds, more sophisticated methods of capturing ghosts were developing.

Sound recordings allowed ghosts a new way to manifest. By simply running a tape recorder while speaking to a ghost, some believe that a ghost can imprint its answers onto the tape, becoming audible. Electronic Voice Phenomena, as these are known, are often hard to interpret but are held by some to be convincing evidence. From tape recorders to infrared cameras and electronic field sensors, the kit of the modern ‘ghost hunter’ is more complex than ever.

The 21st century seems to show no lessening in the fascination with ghosts. Television shows where ghost-hunters try to track down supernatural activity remain perennially popular. The fact that everyone with a mobile phone carries a high definition camera in their pocket has not brought about a surge of ghostly


The Nine-Ten Corporation presents
Is Conan Doyle Right?
Can the Dead Talk to the Living?
See this Spiritualistic Sensation!
by Cullom Holmes Ferrell
Directed by John Joseph Harvey
Pathé Distributors
Country of origin U.S.A.
Have you ever seen a spirit?
Have you ever sat in the circle of "black magic"?
Can spirits write on slates and foretell your future?
Yes, I loved George!

Modern media like films have allowed ghosts and ghostly images to reach a far wider audience than ever before photographs. Today, if ghosts are seen at all in pictures, it tends to be as glowing orbs that sceptics say are nothing other than flashes reflected off motes of dust. It has also never been easier for an image to be faked using computer programs that are easy to use and ubiquitous. The camera may never lie, but people with editing software do. With all this possible fakery, it is no surprise that many ghost encounters today are reported as the feeling of presences around a person rather than visible apparitions that can be seen and photographed.

Perhaps the greatest surprise for those who study ghostlore is the level of commodification that ghosts have undergone in the 20th and 21st centuries. While earlier tales of ghosts were mostly of the scary sort, a modern ghost story can be anything from comical to romantic. The 1990 film *Ghost* introduced the public at large to the notion of pottery throwing, loving spooks. Casper the Friendly Ghost had already turned the ghost into a child-friendly figure. Dead celebrities may reappear after their deaths as reanimated images. Dead singers can strut and perform on stage as holographic ghosts.

Scientists have tried to impress on the public the irrationality of belief in ghosts, as have professional debunkers like James Randy, seemingly to little avail.

A 2018 poll in the United States found 60 per cent of those sampled thought that they had seen a ghost. No amount of explanations involving neurobiology or ideas of resonating low frequency sounds will convince a person that they have not seen a ghost. Though it is easy to laugh at those in the past who so readily believed in spectres and ghouls, it is obvious that humanity is just not ready to give up the ghost quite yet.

Spirit photography in the early 20th century seemed to offer positive proof of the existence of ghosts – until several famous hoaxes were discovered

THE OUIJA BOARD

It started as a game, but has been terrifying generations of teenagers ever since

One of the most recognisable ways of contacting the dead must be the Ouija board. Introduced to the public in 1891 as "The Wonderful Talking Board", the Ouija board was originally viewed as a simple parlour game offering "never-failing amusement and recreation for all classes."

The first advertisement hinted at its later role in spiritualism, describing it as "apparently forming the link which unites the known from the unknown, the material with the immaterial."

The Ouija board is simply a flat board printed with the alphabet, numbers from 0-9, 'Yes', 'No', and 'Goodbye'. The action comes from participants placing a finger loosely on a moveable, heart-shaped piece called the planchette. Questions are asked to the board and by the moving of the planchette, answers can be revealed.

The effects can be uncanny. No one person may be directing the movement of the planchette, yet it can seem to race across the board. The scientifically minded have suggested that the movement can be explained by ideomotor response – unconscious movements. Indeed the original sellers of the Ouija board offered no explanation for its action. Only in the First World War and the 1920s was the Ouija board turned into a method of communicating with the dead.

Images: Getty

YES
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVW

Since first put on sale in 1891 the Ouija board has sold millions of copies around the world to users who seek for mysterious answers

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In a technological world, 21st century paranormal investigators are turning to increasingly sophisticated methods in their search for proof of ghosts

Investigating the paranormal

The paranormal has fascinated people for centuries, from bumps in the night to crackling EVPS. In the technological 21st century, ghost-hunting is more popular than ever

Written by Catherine Curzon

Whether it's paranormal investigators with vans full of expensive technology or old-fashioned ghost-hunters with little more than a torch, the search for ghosts is as popular as it has ever been. It's big business for some, with television and commercial ghost hunts making stars of investigators, whilst for others it's just a bit of fun. In their search for the truth, believers and sceptics alike employ everything from clairvoyance to the latest digital technology, with every discovery analysed to prove whether death is really the end.

Though for most ghost-hunters the supernatural is nothing but a hobby, others have made it their career. When it comes to these professional investigators, Britain's most famous is undoubtedly Harry Price. As a member of the Society for Psychical Research, founder of the rival National Laboratory of Psychical Research and the figurehead of the Ghost Club, Price's paranormal career spanned the first half of the 20th century. His investigations were a far cry from the excitable scenes we see on paranormal TV shows, and though Price believed in the supernatural, he did so whilst exposing fraudulent mediums, fake ectoplasmic photographs, and hoax hauntings.

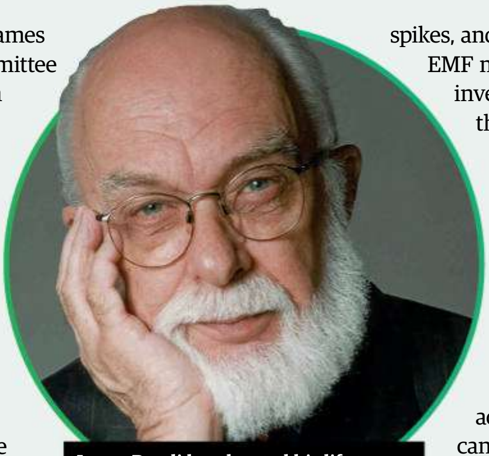
Price's most famous investigation was undertaken at Essex's notorious Borley Rectory, reputed before it was destroyed by fire to be the most haunted place in Britain. Borley was Price's pet project and his books on the subject did much to build the legend that sprang up around the rectory. Though many of his findings were discredited by the Society of Psychical Research and have been further debunked by modern researchers, it made Price's name in the public eye. Whenever there were ghosts to be investigated, Price was on the scene and newspapers were quick to quote his take on supernatural scoops.

In America, meanwhile, husband and wife team Ed and Lorraine Warren were chalking up hit after hit as they pursued not only ghosts, but demons too. Among the 10,000 cases that the Warrens claimed to have examined was the infamous Amityville haunting, which became a Hollywood phenomenon, and the couple even went on the record to claim that a prisoner convicted of manslaughter had been acting under demonic influence when the crime was committed. They didn't secure his freedom, but the case did nothing to harm the Warrens' celebrity. Their names are familiar to a whole new generation thanks to the *Conjuring* film series, in which the Warrens take on everything from the supposedly true story of the Enfield Poltergeist to a fictional demon nun. Though the Warrens are both deceased, the films based on their career show no sign of stopping.

Of course, where there are believers, there are sceptics too. One of the most famous and

Images: Alamy, Getty

tenacious is undoubtedly James Randi, founder of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, which is devoted to proving that the paranormal is nothing but fiction. From orbs to séances and everything in between, these headline-grabbing sceptics analyse and interrogate paranormal evidence using rigorous scientific methods. For more than 50 years Randi offered $1 million to anyone who could demonstrate paranormal phenomena in laboratory conditions. In the half century that the challenge was open, and despite more than a thousand candidates coming forward, nobody ever won the prize.


James Randi has devoted his life to disproving the paranormal. He even offered a million dollars to anyone who could provide proof

Paranormal investigations today use modern technology, just as their forebears called on table-tapping to make contact. There are even companies devoted to supplying technological investigation tools including video cameras, digital thermometers to monitor temperature spikes, and the all-important EMF meters. Some investigators claim that spirits cause fluctuations in the electromagnetic field at a haunted location, and they watch the digital meters for anomalies closely. Sceptics and investigators alike admit that fluctuations can be caused by any number of other things including mobile phones and radio signals, but to some ghost-hunters, they provide positive proof of a nearby phantom. For those who'd like to hear voices from the other world, there are a couple of technological options. One is the spirit box, a device that scans through AM and FM frequencies, supposedly allowing the dead to communicate through the static. Of course, radio stations often broadcast spoken word, leaving the voices picked up on spirit boxes open to question.

Paranormal investigator Harry Price made his name thanks to his work on cases such as Borley Rectory and the strange matter of Gef, the talking mongoose

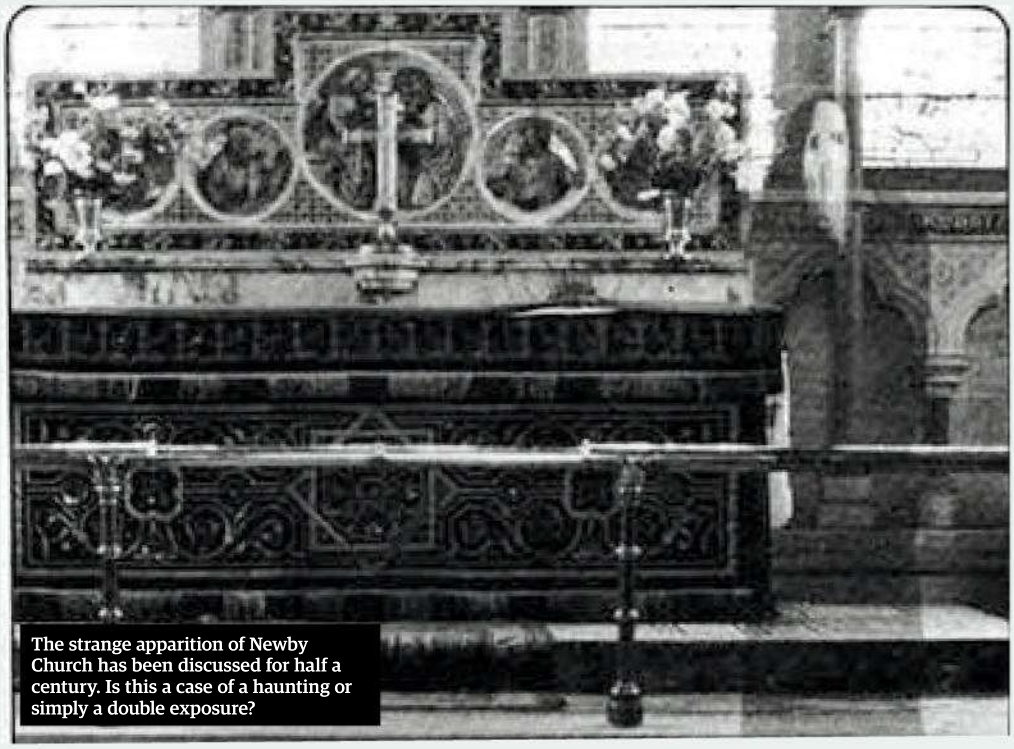
More words from the other side are sought in Electronic Voice Phenomena, better known as EVPs. These are recordings in which an investigator will ask questions aloud, leaving pauses for a reply. They are then played back and the audio combed for any hidden responses, that may be buried deep in the apparent silence.

EVPs gained popularity in the 1950s thanks to Friedrich Jürgenson, who claimed to have captured the voices of deceased family members when recording birdsong. In the 1970s Latvian intellectual Konstantin Raudive claimed that his own recordings, many of which sounded like gibberish, were the voices of the dead. He explained away the gibberish by claiming that spirits would change languages in the middle of a sentence or even speak backwards, mispronouncing and garbling words in their efforts to communicate. His critics weren't convinced and questioned why historical figures such as Hitler suddenly spoke Latvian, when they hadn't in life. Raudive answered that spirits were capable of identity theft too, adopting famous names to stand out from the pack.

> Ghost-hunting methods can include recording and playing back sound, replaying CCTV, or investigating electromagnetic oddities

Much of the technological search for ghosts takes place in a world of static, where seemingly random patterns and sounds are analysed in the hope that they hide something valuable, whether that's a cold spot that never warms up, a spike on the EMF meter that appears to move in response to an investigator's requests, or white noise that can be mixed until audible words emerge. Yet technology is prone to failure and manipulation, and humans are given to wish fulfilment, so desperate to obtain proof of the paranormal that they misinterpret inconsequential coincidences. There is also the possibility of dishonesty, and investigators hoping to make their name have been accused of deliberate fakery, particularly when it comes to paranormal television.

The holy grail for psychic investigators is, of course, a genuine photograph of a phantom. Since William H Mumler created a hoax spirit photo in the 19th century, investigators have striven to capture the real thing. They have succeeded in photographing everything from distorted monks at Newby Church to phantom cemetery mourners, whilst even Google Maps has got in on the act, with users periodically reporting ghostly phenomena in their Street View photographs. Yet even where photographic analysis has failed to prove that the images have been manipulated, there's a degree of trust required when considering them as evidence. After all, even if a photographer claims that there was nobody in the frame when the shot was taken, it's not impossible that someone might have wandered unseen into the shot or colluded with



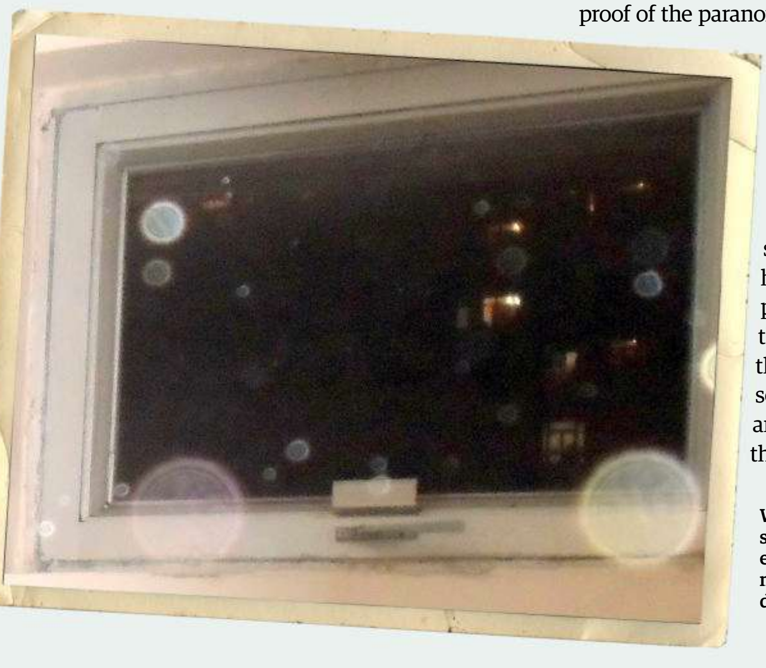
The strange apparition of Newby Church has been discussed for half a century. Is this a case of a haunting or simply a double exposure?

the photographer in a deliberate hoax. In recent years the advent of digital photography has seen a rise in pictures of so-called orbs, which are small, floating balls of light visible on camera or film. Investigators believe that these are the first signs of a manifestation, but their critics suggest what they are actually capturing are digital artefacts, specks of dust or insects.

Critics of ghost-hunting are quick to point out that investigators are usually amateurs who have little specialist training or knowledge of how to get the best out of their technology. They also argue that believers are subject to confirmation bias, jumping to the conclusion that any anomaly is a ghost when in fact there can be a host of more earthly reasons to consider first, including radio interference, human intervention or simple reflections. Without controlled scientific conditions, they say, investigations cannot be trusted, even if those conducting them are honest and operating in good faith.

When technology fails, investigators turn to tried and tested methods, and chief amongst these is the psychic medium. With no special equipment required, mediums visit a location and attempt to make contact with the spirits who walk there. Organised investigations often involve a medium, whose purpose is to lead communication with the spirits. TV shows such as *Most Haunted* have made such investigations hugely popular, with participants joining investigators and mediums in the hope of seeing proof of the paranormal.

Paranormal investigations and those who conduct them are here to stay. Perhaps one day someone will stumble on irrefutable proof of a ghost and capture it on camera in the scientific conditions that sceptics demand. Perhaps, however, the search for paranormal proof isn't about the conclusion itself, but about the journey believers and sceptics alike take to get there, and the spirited debates that they enjoy on the way.



Whilst some believe that orbs are spirit manifestations, photographic experts suggest that they are far more likely to be reflected moisture, dust or even insects

WATCHING THE PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS

Why ghost-hunters have us glued to our sofas

Pranormal investigations make for popular, cheap and controversial television. In the UK, *Most Haunted* has run for a whopping 25 seasons, and enjoyed a period of huge popularity. It made a star of its flamboyant resident medium, the late Derek Acorah, who left the show amid allegations of fakery, when he was apparently tricked by production into channelling the spirit of a man who had never actually existed.

In the US, *Ghost Hunters* has criss-crossed the country in search of ghost activity for nearly 250 episodes. It has done much to popularise the use of technology in the search for ghosts and even has its own line of licensed ghost-hunting equipment!

Perhaps the most infamous televised paranormal investigation was *Ghostwatch*. Broadcast on BBC 1 on Halloween in 1992. *Ghostwatch* showcased an investigation in a suburban home. Hosted by Michael Parkinson and featuring well-loved TV presenters, some people believed that what they were watching was a documentary. When presenter Sarah Greene was attacked and viewers were warned that an evil spirit had used the broadcast to enter their homes, the BBC switchboards lit up with terrified callers. The resultant outcry included accusations that the programme had left some viewers hysterical and contributed to at least one suicide. Unsurprisingly, *Ghostwatch* has never been repeated on UK TV.

The late Derek Acorah achieved notoriety as the resident medium on *Most Haunted*, where he claimed to channel everything from nobility to dead dogs

Images: Getty, Via Wiki Martin J Cooper, Wiki James Randi Educational Foundation, Wiki Reverend KF Lord, Wiki Earth100

The Enfield Poltergeist

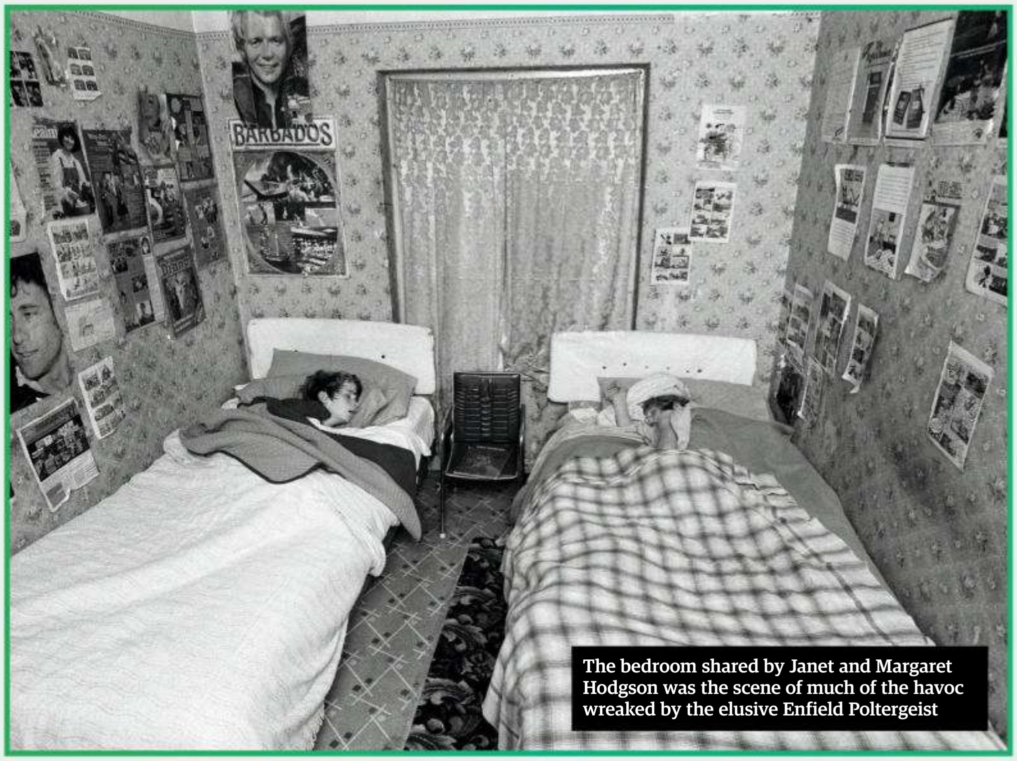
The manifestations of a poltergeist named Bill in the late 1970s led to one of Britain's most celebrated such cases of unexplained phenomena

Written by Michael E Haskew

There was obvious distress in Peggy Hodgson's voice when she called local police to her rented terrace home in Enfield, North London, where the single mother was raising four children.

As her children prepared for bed that August evening in 1977, Peggy heard a strange noise upstairs. Thinking it was her younger daughters, 13-year-old Margaret and 11-year-old Janet, scuffling, she went for a look. While the girls were indeed playing, something terrifying did happen. A heavy chest began sliding across the room, apparently without assistance. When Peggy began shoving it back, she met strong resistance from an unseen force. The chest moved a second time, faster. Aghast, Peggy and the girls left quickly.

When police officers arrived, they found nothing unusual – until they started to leave. Years later, one of them remembered a chair in the living room rising a half-inch off the floor and moving across the room. After checking for wires and other unseen reasons for the episode, the police left. However, the soon-to-be called Enfield Poltergeist did not. For months, the poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects across rooms and making noises.



The bedroom shared by Janet and Margaret Hodgson was the scene of much of the havoc wreaked by the elusive Enfield Poltergeist

As news of the phenomena leaked out, sceptics accused the girls of being the source. In desperation, Peggy contacted the Society for Psychical Research. Two investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Grosse, responded, hiring a barrister, Mary Rose Barrington, to verify their research. During more than a year on the premises, the investigators recorded numerous incidents, including Playfair's encounter after hearing a loud noise. He entered an upstairs room to find the entire Victorian-era fireplace, probably weighing 60 pounds, ripped from the wall – hardly an act that young girls were capable of performing.

Witnesses saw Janet levitate, and she was dragged by an unknown entity from her bedroom and down the stairs. She also broke into disturbing fits of cursing, and an eerie voice was heard. When the investigators posed questions, the voice replied that it belonged to a man named Bill, who had lived in the house and died in a chair years earlier. A record search revealed that a man named Bill Wilkins had lived in the house and died there.

Throughout the investigation, the girls were suspected of playing tricks, and they admitted as much later on, but claimed only one or two per cent of the occurrences were their doing. 30 years after the events subsided, Janet told an interviewer, "I know from my own experience that it was real. It lived off me, off my energy."

Although the sceptics persist, the poltergeist activity in Enfield remains largely unexplained.

> *"For months, the Enfield Poltergeist wreaked havoc, apparently throwing objects across rooms and making noises... sceptics accused the girls of being the source"*

17 February 1978; investigators review evidence of the the Enfield Poltergeist at the Hodgson home on Green Street, where two girls were reportedly tormented

The four Hodgson children, Janet, Margaret, Billy, and Johnny experienced the terror of the Enfield Poltergeist, but the daughters admitted to some fakery

Images: Alamy, Getty

The haunted house

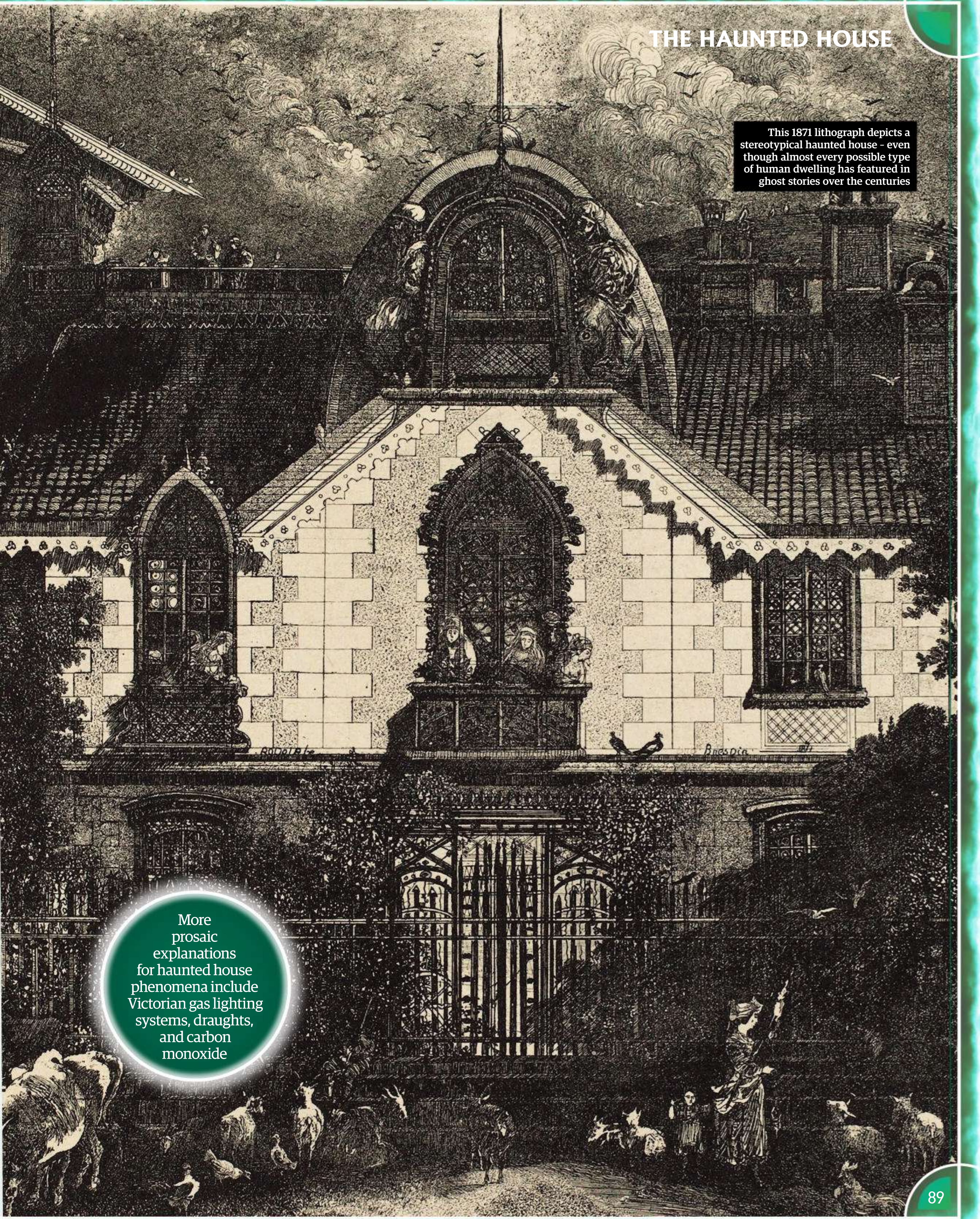
Haunted houses have fascinated us since ancient times, but is there a scientific reason why people often claim to experience supernatural incidents in certain buildings?

Written by Melanie Clegg

For as long as people have been interested in spooky stories of ghosts and phantoms, they have been just as fascinated by the buildings linked to these tales, some of which have attained a celebrity of their own over the centuries thanks to the unexplained and mysterious occurrences that have happened within their walls.

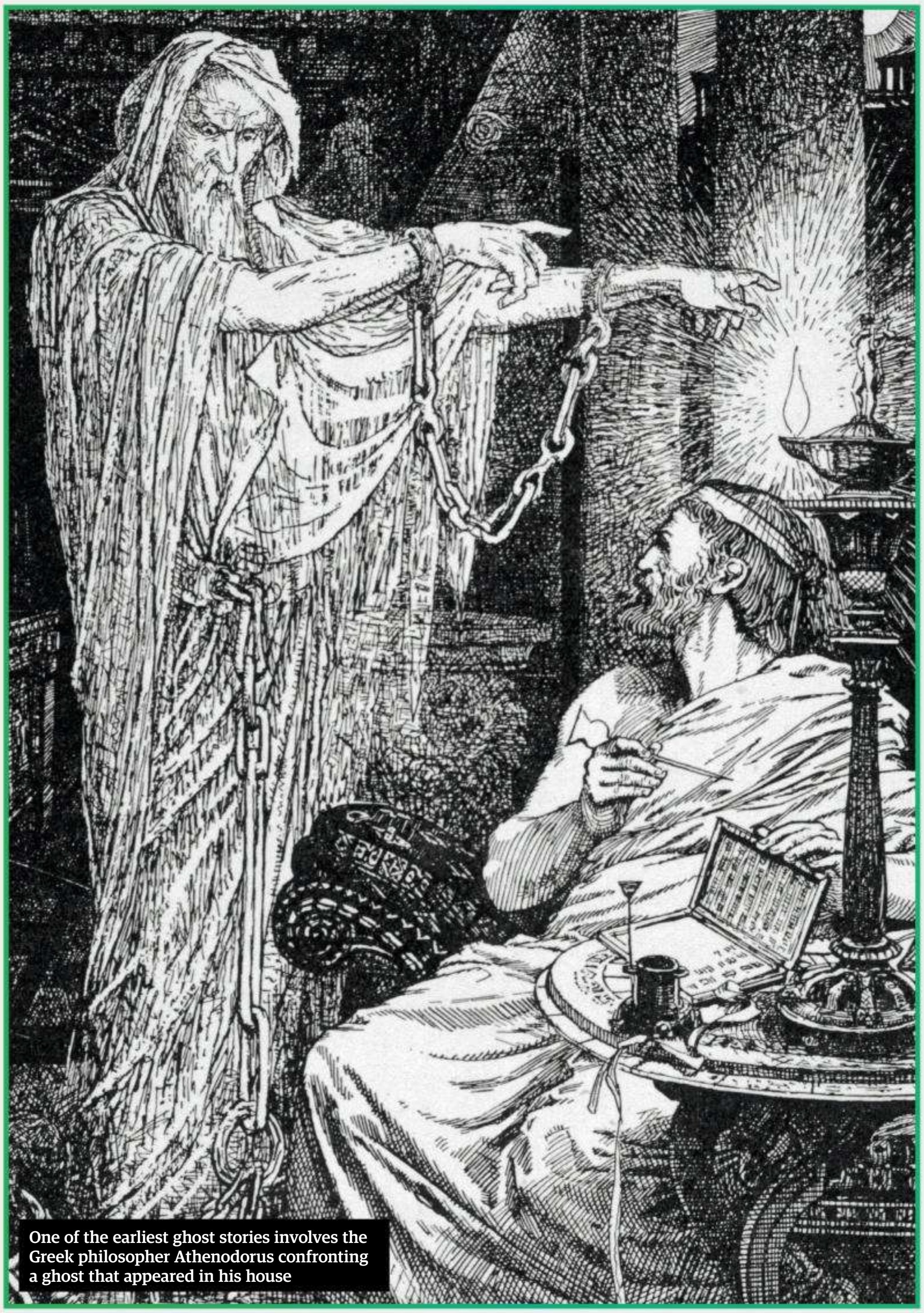
The earliest known haunted house appears in a letter written by the ancient Roman lawyer and author Pliny the Younger to his patron, Lucius Sura. Pliny recounted the tale of an old house in Athens, Greece that had been considered uninhabitable for several years because the local residents believed that it was haunted by the terrifying spectre of an old man bound in chains. Tempted by the low rent and undaunted by the house's creepy reputation, the philosopher Athenodorus moved into the house and was visited by the ghost, who beckoned to him and then led him to a spot in the courtyard, where it disappeared. The following day, Athenodorus and a group of local people dug up the spot where the ghost had vanished and discovered the skeleton of an old man, who had obviously been murdered. When the bones were carefully reburied according to the custom of the area, the ghost was never seen again and Athenodorus was able to enjoy his house in peace. This ancient tale has many of the hallmarks of what would become the haunted house tradition – in particular the idea that buildings could be haunted by restless spirits who were trapped and unable to move on, either because they had died there or had been buried on the premises.

Over the centuries, tales about haunted houses have continued to proliferate, with virtually every culture and country having more than one example. Perhaps the best known haunted houses are in Britain, where a preoccupation with the country's famously violent history has imbued hundreds of buildings – from grand castles to humble terraced houses – with a sinister reputation, allegedly leading almost half of the population to believe



This 1871 lithograph depicts a stereotypical haunted house - even though almost every possible type of human dwelling has featured in ghost stories over the centuries

More prosaic explanations for haunted house phenomena include Victorian gas lighting systems, draughts, and carbon monoxide



One of the earliest ghost stories involves the Greek philosopher Athenodorus confronting a ghost that appeared in his house

that a building can be haunted. Meanwhile, although America's history has been arguably a little less eventful, it too has more than its fair share of haunted houses, many of which- such as southern plantation mansions – are linked to the darker side of the nation's past while others, such as the house at the heart of the Amityville Horror story are allegedly testament to more recent traumas. According to a *Time* magazine article, the Whaley House in San Diego, which was built in 1857, is the most haunted house in America thanks to a number of tragic events that have occurred within its walls and rumours of strange noises and other phenomena.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, ghost stories abound about the 17th-century Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, which is believed to be the oldest existing building in the country and has numerous links to South Africa's bloody history, having been used as both a prison and an army barracks. Many soldiers who have been posted there have reported hearing screams, footsteps and other noises late at night, while other visitors claim to have felt cold and uneasy in certain areas and to have seen a spectral soldier and a ghostly woman dressed in grey, believed to be Lady Anne Barnard, who lived in the castle at the end of the 18th century. One of the most haunted houses in China is Chaonei No. 81 in Beijing, which had always had a creepy reputation in the city but became more widely famous in 2014 after the horror film *The House That Never Dies* was set there. The house is allegedly haunted by the ghost of a young woman who took her own life and is apparently so spooky that even a group of Chinese Red Guards who stayed there in the 1960s fled after just a few days, while it's alleged that other visitors to the house have mysteriously vanished, never to be seen again.

There are many reputedly haunted houses in other parts of Asia, such as the Morgan House in Kalimpong – a colonial mansion that is said to be haunted by the restless spirit of its first owner, Mrs Morgan, who is said to have been murdered by her husband. Perhaps the most famous haunted house in Malaysia is the Kinarut Mansion, a ruin believed by some to be haunted by a 'Hantu Tinggi' (a Malay ghost that takes the form of a tree) as well as a 'Pontianak' (a sad Malay vampiric spirit who is said to be the ghost of a woman who died during pregnancy).

While many people believe that houses can become haunted – usually either because of a traumatic event like a murder or fatal accident occurring within their walls or, more romantically, because an individual was so attached to the building that they either refused to leave or decided to return after their death – others are of the opinion that hauntings are caused by more prosaic factors, many of which can simply be linked to the age of most of the properties, which make them more susceptible to draughts as well as creaks, groans and other unexpected noises. Meanwhile, some researchers suspect that exposure to carbon monoxide may be at the heart of many alleged hauntings, with sufferers experiencing light headedness, hallucinations, feelings of dread and other symptoms that have often been linked to alleged haunted houses. The fact that many reports of haunted houses have their origins in the Victorian era has also caused some researchers to wonder if the substances involved in gas lighting may be to blame as in large doses, they could potentially have caused mild hallucinations and other physical symptoms such as lethargy, depression, disassociation and intense sadness, all commonly associated with hauntings. Other sensations, such as allegations of being touched or pushed by invisible forces or seeing objects moving by themselves, are more difficult to explain, but could also potentially be due to sensory hallucinations or physical ailments, such as restless leg syndrome or even dementia. It's also true that the rich and fascinating history of some of the haunted buildings can create a form of confirmation bias that makes some more sensitive and imaginative visitors susceptible to believing that they have experienced a supernatural event – for example, the famous incident in the gardens of Versailles when two women claimed to encounter Marie Antoinette and various members of her entourage. It's also true that just the knowledge that the building is reputed to be haunted might be enough to cause some sensitive visitors, who are now in a heightened sense of alert and apprehension, to believe that they too have experienced a ghostly encounter. In other cases, it may be that 'waking dreams' or hypnagogia – a rare sensory illusion that commonly occurs in the brief period between sleep and true wakefulness and which can cause lucid dreaming, sleep paralysis and even hallucinations – may be involved in many alleged hauntings as sufferers often talk about feeling or even seeing presences around them while in this state, or experience feelings of intense fear, sadness and depression – all of which are commonly said to be felt by people in haunted houses.

Whatever the truth, even in an increasingly cynical age, haunted houses continue to fascinate, with cynics and believers alike flocking to visit them in the hopes of either debunking the myths or enjoying a spectral encounter of their own. Although in the past, the local haunted house would usually be avoided by most of the community, with only thrill-seeking children and teenagers passing through its doors, nowadays haunted houses are big business, with several thousand operating as tourist attractions in America alone. In the United Kingdom, mentioning the fact that a building is haunted is usually seen as a huge draw, especially if it is possible to spend the night. Not everyone is a fan though – in 1991, an American court case ruled that sellers must disclose to potential buyers if the property has ever allegedly been haunted as this can affect its future value. Popularly known as the 'Ghostbusters Ruling', this came about when a New York woman sold her house without informing the new owner that the house had a local reputation for being haunted by at least three ghosts, including a soldier from the American War of Independence, and that she and her family had claimed numerous times over the years to have experienced paranormal incidents in their home. When the new owner discovered the truth, he was forced to take legal action in order to back out of the sale, which created so much publicity that the estate agents quickly found themselves inundated with other prospective buyers, all keen to own a haunted house of their very own.

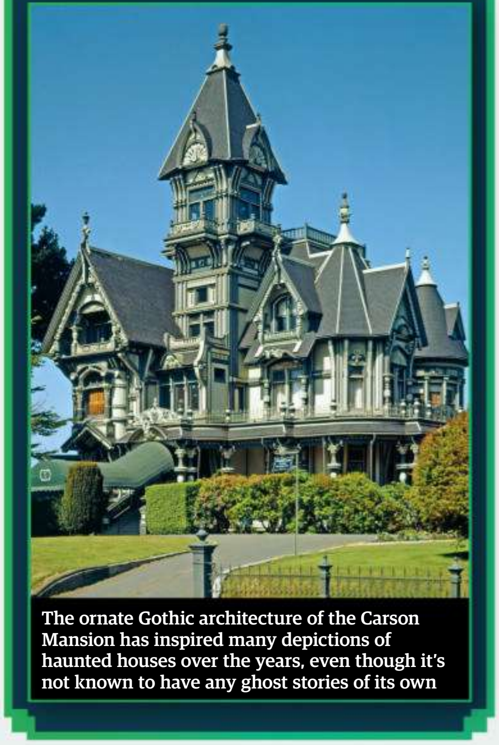
> *"Cynics and believers alike flock to visit them in the hopes of either debunking the myths or enjoying a spectral encounter of their own"*

The pretty Whaley House in San Diego is reputed to be one of the most haunted houses in America, boasting no fewer than three ghosts

THE CARSON MANSION

What do you picture when you try to imagine a typical haunted house?

When people think of haunted houses, they very often picture a spooky Gothic mansion with ornate gables and turrets, perhaps not realising that the prototype for this image is an actual house in California. Built in the mid-1880s in the town of Eureka, the Carson Mansion was the brainchild of a wealthy businessman who wanted a grand mansion in the then-highly fashionable and ornate Queen Anne architectural style, an offshoot of the Eastlake style, that was intended to evoke the rambling, asymmetrical, romantic appearance of baronial British architecture with porches, spindly gothic detailing, Dutch gables, stained glass windows and towers – all of which we now often associate with haunted houses. Although this ornate style has often been derided over the years, the Carson Mansion is now much admired and has been described as one of the finest examples of 19th-century architecture in America. However, despite its famously creepy appearance, which has resulted in it appearing – albeit heavily doctored – on posters, book covers and other media, and even led to it inspiring the haunted Mystic Manor in the Hong Kong Disneyland, there have been no known reports of any paranormal activity inside the Carson Mansion, which is now owned by a private members club.


The ornate Gothic architecture of the Carson Mansion has inspired many depictions of haunted houses over the years, even though it's not known to have any ghost stories of its own

The Dodleston MESSAGES

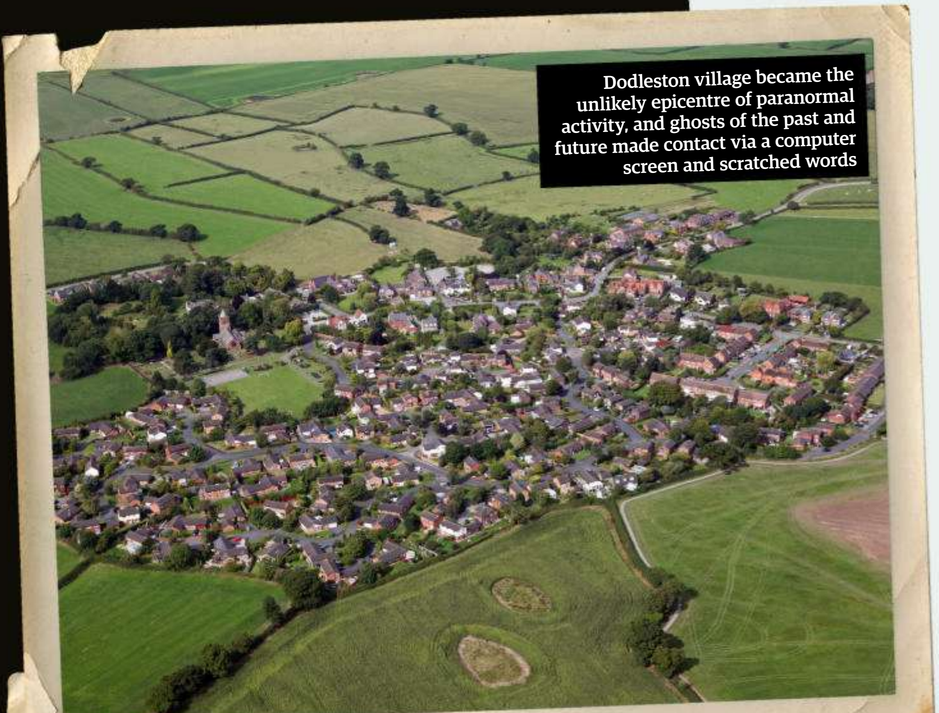
Did a 16th century spirit and a mysterious future entity really make contact with a teacher through his BBC Micro computer?

Written by Catherine Curzon

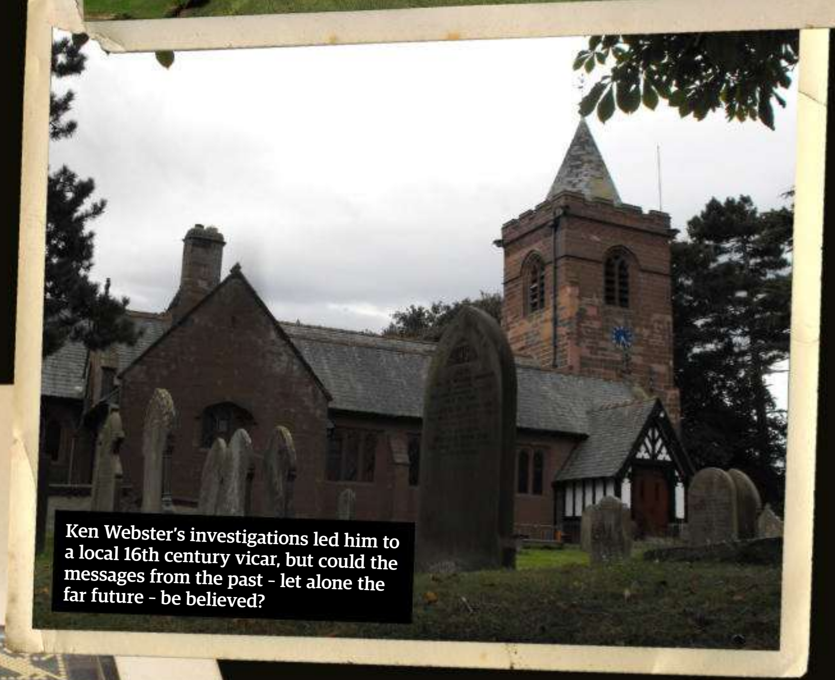
In 1985, a BBC Micro plunged teacher Ken Webster into a mystery, as messages began to appear from beyond the grave

BRITISH BROADCASTIN
MICROCOMPU
BREAK
ESCAPE
TAB
CAPS LOCK
CTRL
SHIFT LOCK
SHIFT
cassette motor
caps lock
shift lock

THE DODLESTON MESSAGES



Dodleston village became the unlikely epicentre of paranormal activity, and ghosts of the past and future made contact via a computer screen and scratched words



Ken Webster's investigations led him to a local 16th century vicar, but could the messages from the past – let alone the far future – be believed?

In 1985, teacher Ken Webster's renovation project on 18th century Meadow Cottage in Dodleston was disturbed by some very strange occurrences indeed. Six-toed footprints appeared on the walls of his bathroom and cans of cat food magically stacked themselves into pyramids. Believing he was the subject of a prank, Ken put the tins away, painted out the footprints and went back to work.

Ken borrowed a BBC computer from the school where he worked and soon after he brought it home, a poem appeared on the screen of the computer, followed a few days later by a message that appeared to be written in archaic English, and accused Ken of stealing the house. For the next 18 months, Ken Webster's computer lit up with messages from what seemed to be the ghost of one of the cottage's previous inhabitants.

Determined to find out who his correspondent was, Ken asked questions of the entity and it replied with information about the era it had inhabited, as well as making observations on Ken's own era. The author of the messages referred to themselves as Lukas, and as the dramatic messages increased, he was arrested for using the "light box" in his own era. It was then revealed that he was actually a vicar named Thomas Harden, whose messages were being interfered with by future beings.

If that wasn't strange enough, as messages from Thomas began to appear scratched onto surfaces in the cottage, those on the computer took on a different tone as a third party weighed in from the year 2109. This new character suggested that Ken and his girlfriend were the subjects of a mysterious experiment and told them not to meddle. Whatever the truth, despite Ken's best efforts to decipher the source of the messages, they eventually ended and the computer fell silent again.

Ken Webster told the story of the BBC Micro messages in his own book, citing evidence that the messages were written in a language and style inherent to the 1500s. Researchers, however, have pointed out multiple mistakes and inconsistencies in the messages that would suggest they were written not by someone in the 16th century, but by someone aping that style of writing. So was Ken Webster the victim – or perpetrator – of a prank, or did he really stand at the centre of messages from the past and the future? Both 'Thomas' and '2109' promised that a book would be found that would reveal all but, decades later, that book remains frustratingly undiscovered.

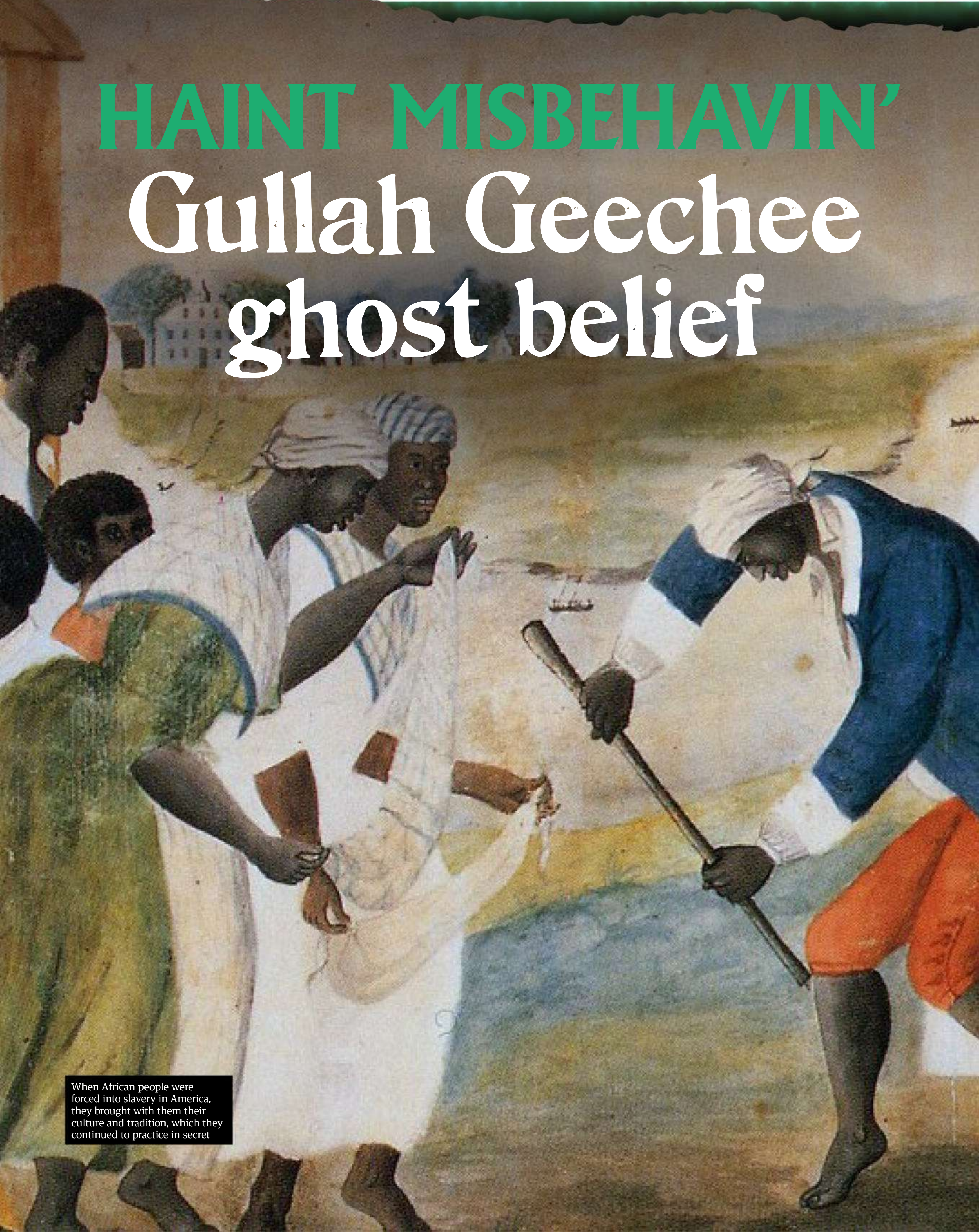
> *"This new character suggested that Ken and his girlfriend were the subjects of a mysterious experiment and told them not to meddle"*

CORPORATION
TER SYSTEM
RETURN
DELETE
COPY

Images: Alamy, Getty

HAINT MISBEHAVIN'

Gullah Geechee ghost belief



When African people were forced into slavery in America, they brought with them their culture and tradition, which they continued to practice in secret

In the American Gullah Geechee community, descendants of the enslaved people of West and Central Africa continue to honour the traditions and beliefs of their ancestors

Written by Catherine Curzon

In a 12,000 square mile region of the USA, from South Carolina to Florida, many of the Gullah Geechee people have made their home. As descendants of the enslaved people of West and Central Africa, they keep alive the memory, traditions and beliefs of their ancestors. These traditions and spiritual practices are known as Hoodoo, a folk tradition that harnesses knowledge of both the natural world and the spirit realm in a unique belief system that focusses on body, soul and spirit. Rooted deep in the Gullah Geechee community alongside Hoodoo is a rich and fascinating ghostlore, which can still be seen to this day.

Hoodoo came to the United States with the enslaved African people who were forced to make the journey over long and agonising centuries. With them these people brought their indigenous beliefs and traditions, among them spiritual practices and specialist botanical knowledge known as rootwork, that allowed them to use the local flora in their spiritual practices. The botanical knowledge that had been so common in Africa was transplanted to America, where the enslaved people soon began to gain similar knowledge and expertise of the plants and animals in this new territory, which they incorporated into their Hoodoo practice.

Due to slave owners and even legal restrictions on demonstrating their indigenous faith, much of the worship was carried out in secret. In fact, some Hoodoo practices were even intended to fight back against slavery. When free African Hoodoo conjurer Peter the Doctor led a slave revolt in 1712 in colonial New York, he provided the enslaved Africans who took part in the revolt with a magical powder of his own making. This secret combination of ingredients was intended to offer the rebels protection against harm and scholars have theorised that it likely included dirt from African graves, which would ensure that ancestral spirits were fighting alongside those who joined the revolt. Cemetery dirt was also used by those escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad, who rubbed it onto the soles of their feet to confound the dogs who were sent to track them,

Through their rootwork and rituals, also known as conjure, enslaved Hoodoo conjurers on plantations provided invaluable support to their fellow slaves. They used botanical conjure to punish abusive plantation owners, secretly mixing up and enchanting powders of root that were supplied to those who needed them. The

> *"With them they brought their indigenous beliefs and traditions, among them specialist botanical knowledge known as rootwork"*

Images: Getty

THE RING SHOUT

This funeral tradition speeds the spirit of the dead and protects the living

In order to ensure that the souls of the dead safely make the journey from the physical realm to the spiritual one, Hoodoo practitioners in the Gullah Geechee people have a number of death rituals. Among them is a ceremony known as the ring shout, which is performed on several occasions, but usually in the same manner. In this ceremony, participants dance counterclockwise in a shuffling manner, clapping their hands and stamping their feet or keeping the beat with whatever materials are available. Though some ring shouters sing, there is not necessarily any need to shout or make any vocal sounds at all whilst performing the ring shout.

Today, cultural traditions and practices including the ring shout continue to be performed by members of the Gullah Geechee community in the United States.

In this ritual, enslaved people believed that they became charged with spiritual energy until the centre of the ring became a vortex to the ancestral realm. At Gullah Geechee funerals attendees performed a ring shout around a grave as a way of conveying the soul safely into the spirit realm. They would conclude the burial by smashing bottles and crockery on the grave, to break the chain of death and ensure the longevity of remaining family members.

slaves were instructed to chew the roots and spit the chewed pulp in the direction of their unsuspecting slave masters, at which point the slaves would be protected from harm inflicted by their oppressors.

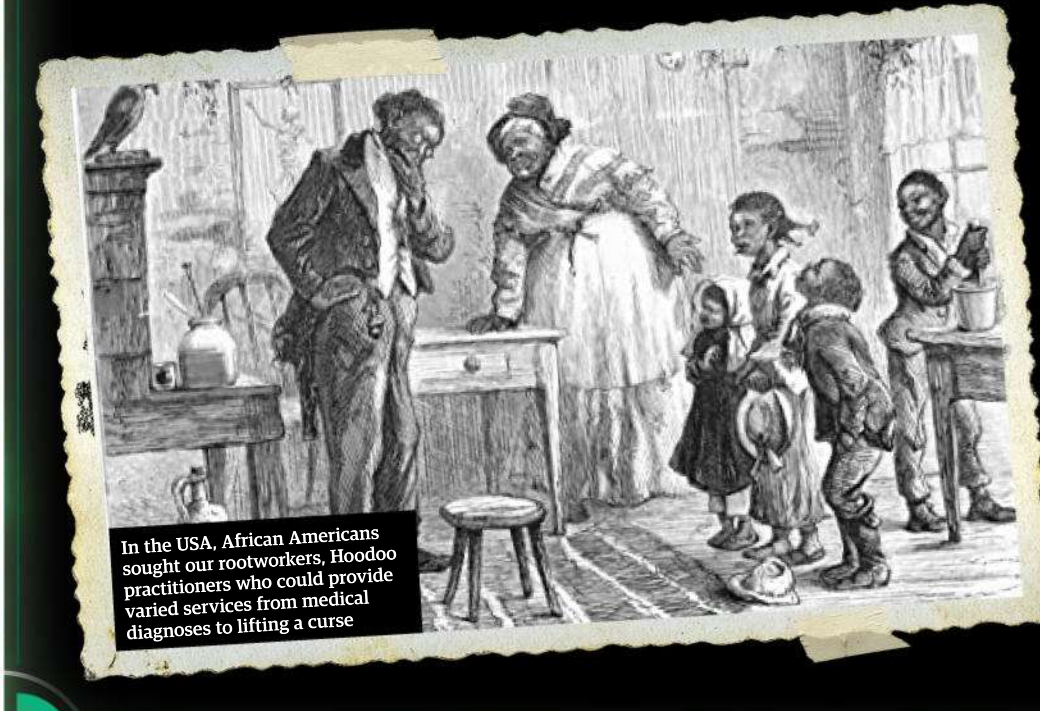
According to one story, a Hoodoo practitioner known as Old Julie had become famous and feared for her apparent ability to conjure death on those who wronged her. Eventually, the plantation owner became so frightened of becoming the target of Old Julie's powers that he tried to sell her on. However, no sooner had they set out on the steamboat to transport her to a new plantation than she used her magic to turn the vessel back to where it had started, forcing the terrified plantation master to keep her on his property for the rest of her life.

Conjure was an important weapon against white oppression for enslaved Africans. Little understood by the slave masters, Hoodoo gave the African people something with which to fight back, either literally or psychologically. Their traditions were handed down through the generations after abolition too, spreading among Black communities as travel became widespread. Practitioners such as magician Black Herman turned Hoodoo and rootwork into a business, providing services for clients across the United States, and conjurers opened shops and mail order businesses to satisfy demand for their unique expertise.

Just as Hoodoo conjurers understand that the Earth can be used in harmony with the unseen, Gullah Geechee people know that there is more to our existence than the mere physical plane. In their ghostlore, they recognise that the three facets that make up a person are body, soul and spirit, and these elements go their different ways at death: the body to the grave and the soul to rest. The spirit, however, remains.

These spirits vary in manner and behaviour, just like human beings. Whilst some are peaceful and content not to trouble the living, others could become troublesome pests. Known to the community as haints (derived from haunts), to underestimate these troublesome spirits can be a grave error. If a haint gained entry to a home, it might stick like an infestation, even perching on the back of a person as they slept, holding them down and keeping them powerless. Yet the Gullah Geechee believed that there was one way in which the haints could be warded off and their homes protected: colour.

"Haint blue" is a hue that has long been employed as protection by the Gullah Geechee people. This indigo-based shade is very similar to that of the sky or water and, according to belief, the haints would either pass through the blue harmlessly, believing it to be the sky, or avoid it altogether thanks to their fear of water. Centuries ago, when working on indigo plantations, the Gullah Geechee would dip rags into the vats of pigment and paint the blue along the openings of their homes, from window frames to doors, and any crack through which a haint might enter. These colourful reminders of the past



In the USA, African Americans sought our rootworkers, Hoodoo practitioners who could provide varied services from medical diagnoses to lifting a curse can be seen on former slave quarters, and blue remains a popular colour for doors, porches and windowpanes in the South, whether for its protective qualities or to honour ancestral tradition. Today, many people in Gullah Geechee communities follow the African tradition of displaying bottles of indigo glass on trees outside their homes, in tribute to the bottle trees of their ancestors. It was believed that the haints would become entrapped in the bottles and be held there by the indigo, to be dispersed into nothing at dawn by the rays of the rising sun.

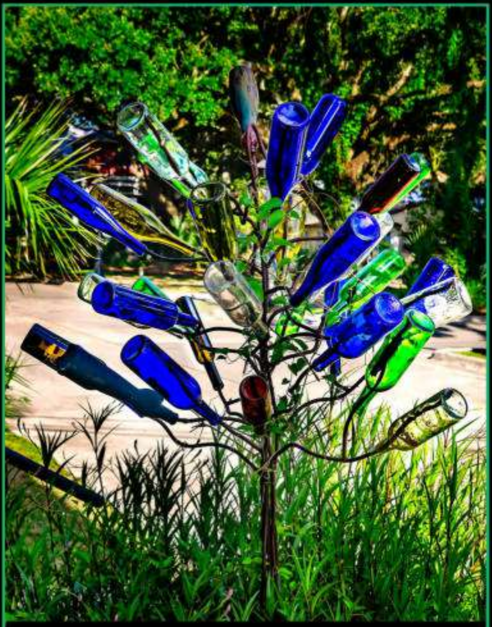
The indigo bottles served another purpose too; not only did they capture and hold haints, but they were also a very useful device for apprehending boo hags, a figure from Gullah Geechee folklore who shares strong connections and similarities with other cultural hags. The boo hag was written about extensively by Jacob Stroyer, who was born to an enslaved mother in South Carolina in 1849.

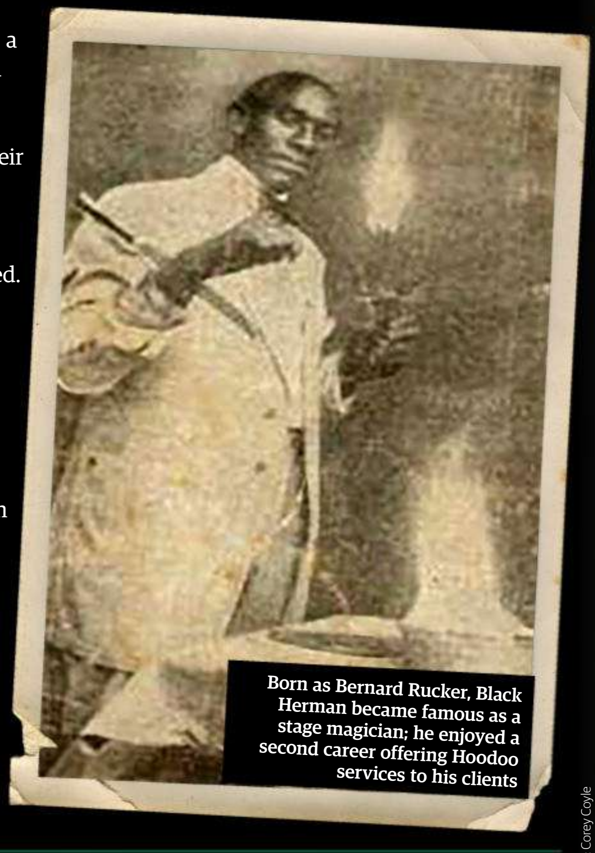
In his reminiscences on the folklore and legends that he learned on the plantation, Stroyer wrote of male and female witches who worked on plantations and were known as Jack Lanterns or Old Hags. Often elderly and sporting an unusual appearance, they were suspected of witchcraft by the slaves. If unexplained lights were sighted in the darkness on the edge of the plantation, many believed it signalled the arrival of a hag, a powerful and dangerous witch intent on getting onto the plantation. Once inside, they would transform themselves into humans and move amongst the community, selecting who would become their victim at nightfall. Then when the sun went down and everyone was asleep, the hag would turn back into a witch and climb onto the back of their victim, then ride them like a horse all night, leaving them exhausted and haunted. The power of a hag was similar to that of a vampire, though they drained the life force of their victims not by drinking their blood, but by their nighttime rides.

Boo hags were often believed to have sold their souls to the devil in return for shapeshifting powers and were greatly feared. There were two defences against boo hags; one was a Bible, the other a sprinkling of salt and cayenne pepper in the corners of the room, which was believed to form a protective barrier against boo hags. Happily, haint blue and indigo bottles could also capture them, until once again the rays of the morning sun would eradicate them from this world completely.

Among the Gullah Geechee people, traditional belief and practice has survived through the ages, giving strength during the darkest years and continuing into the modern era. In this combination of ancient and modern, of past and present, rootwork, ancestral beliefs and ghostlore are central to a rich heritage that the slave masters could not crush.

In the southern states, houses are painted "Haint blue". This colour is traditionally believed to ward off haints, evil spirits who seek to torment the living


This bottle tree in Mississippi honours an African tradition; the bottles are intended to detain hags and haints, which will be destroyed by the rising sun


Born as Bernard Rucker, Black Herman became famous as a stage magician; he enjoyed a second career offering Hoodoo services to his clients

"To underestimate these troublesome spirits can be a grave error. If a haint gained entry, it might stick like an infestation, even perching on the back of a person as they slept"

Images: Getty, Alamy, Wiki: Biancaserafano, Wiki: Corey Coyle

Weird creatures

100 Monsters and mythical beasts

Lurking in the unknown regions of the world, monsters have always fascinated us

110 Heavenly creatures

Far from being far away in heaven, many believe that angels are all around us

114 Subtle bodies

The real jinn of folklore are far from the wish-granting genies of fairy tales

116 Demons from hell

Since the dawn of civilisation humans have believed in the terrifying denizens of darkness, evil and death

120 Creatures of the night

For the creatures of the night, death is not the end but the beginning of a long and complicated afterlife

124 Spirits of place

From the Roman genius loci to the guardian spirit belief found across Asia, many cultures honour the supernatural protectors that watch over them

126 Be fae, do crimes

XFrom innocent woodland sprites to mysterious agents of chaos, the fairy folk have emerged from folklore to occupy a unique place in the culture of humankind

Monsters and mythical beasts

Lurking in the unknown regions of the world and the recesses of our minds, monsters have always fascinated humans

Written by Ben Gazur

In the last Ice Age the most fearsome beast in Europe was the cave lion and the largest creature was the mammoth. To the humans of this period both must have represented powers beyond their control. Yet there, 40,000 years ago, a human took a piece of mammoth tusk and carved a figure that united beast and man. The Lowenmensch ('Lion Man') is a statue with the body and limbs of a human but surmounted by the head of a lion, and is the earliest piece of figurative art yet discovered. At the birth of art humans were already considering the ideas that would later be unleashed in the search for monsters and uncanny animals.

The Lowenmensch figurine is by no means unique in ancient art. Therianthrope (animal-human hybrid) images appear in cave art from around the world. 12,000 years ago in France the image of a human with the ears and horns of a stag was etched and painted into a cave wall, four metres above the ground in an inaccessible place, as if to place such creatures far away. What did these early figures represent? Because they predate writing we will never be sure whether these were gods, spirits, monsters, or some category of being now unknown to us.

WHAT IS A MONSTER?

Monsters come in many forms – as many as the human imagination can create. For our purposes though we can say that a monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature. A wolf is natural, a man is natural, but a werewolf partaking of both forms is monstrous. A dog having one head is commonplace but give him three and you have Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades.

The word monster probably derives from the Latin words monstrare – to demonstrate – and monare – to warn. For the Romans, the divine often spoke through the natural world. A monstrous birth, of an animal with two heads for example, would be a sign and a warning given to humans by the gods. For our ancestors, monsters and mythical beasts were far more present in their daily lives as they lived closer to the cycle of birth and death.

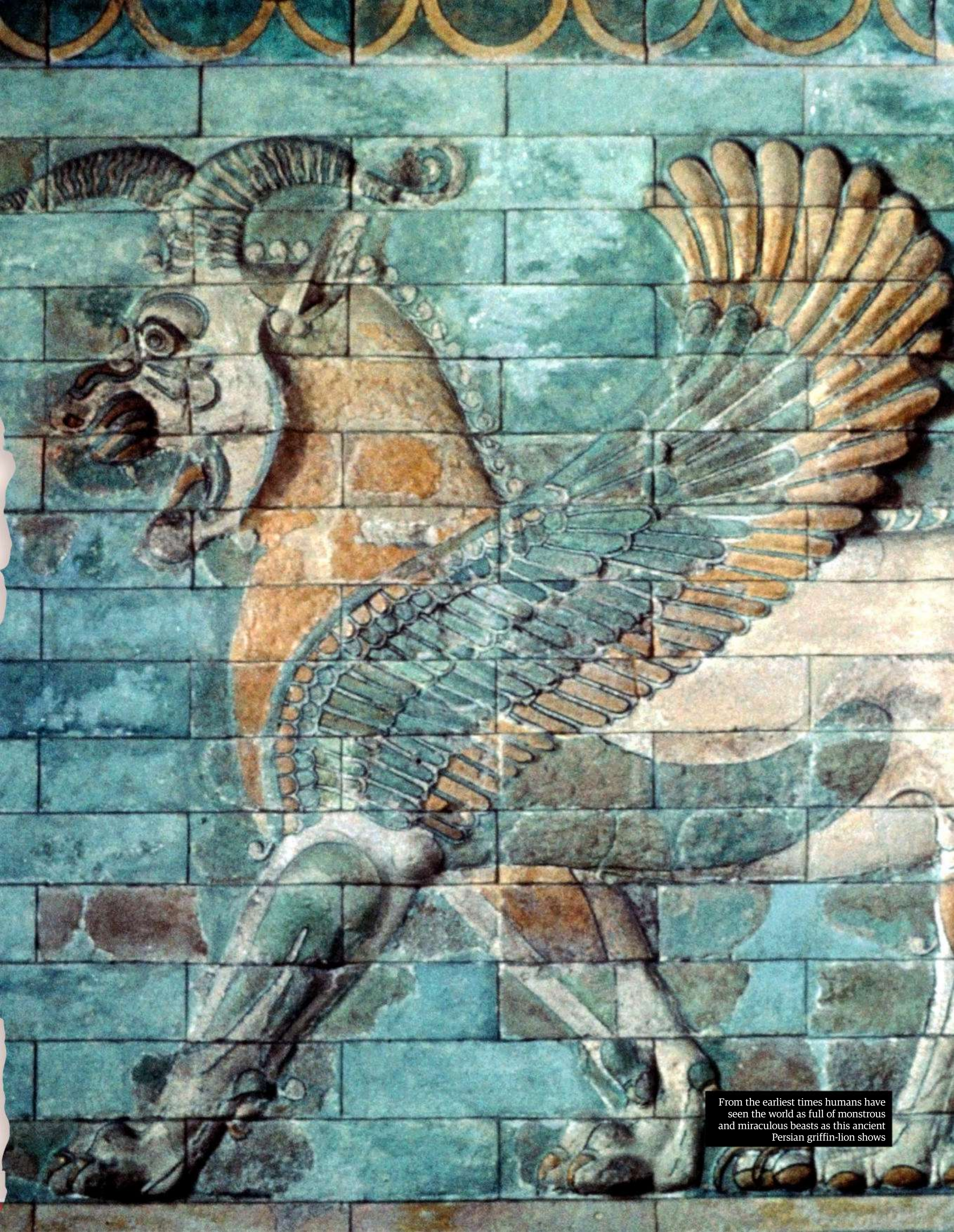
Ignorance is also a key aspect in the creation of many monsters. If you do not understand nature then anything can seem unnatural. What did the ancient Greeks make of the first giraffe they saw? The name they gave the long-necked and spotted animals was 'camelopardalis', derived from their words for camel and leopard.

Clearly the giraffe was a monstrous crossing of the two. As we shall see, the mixing of different species was one of the most fertile grounds for creating monsters.

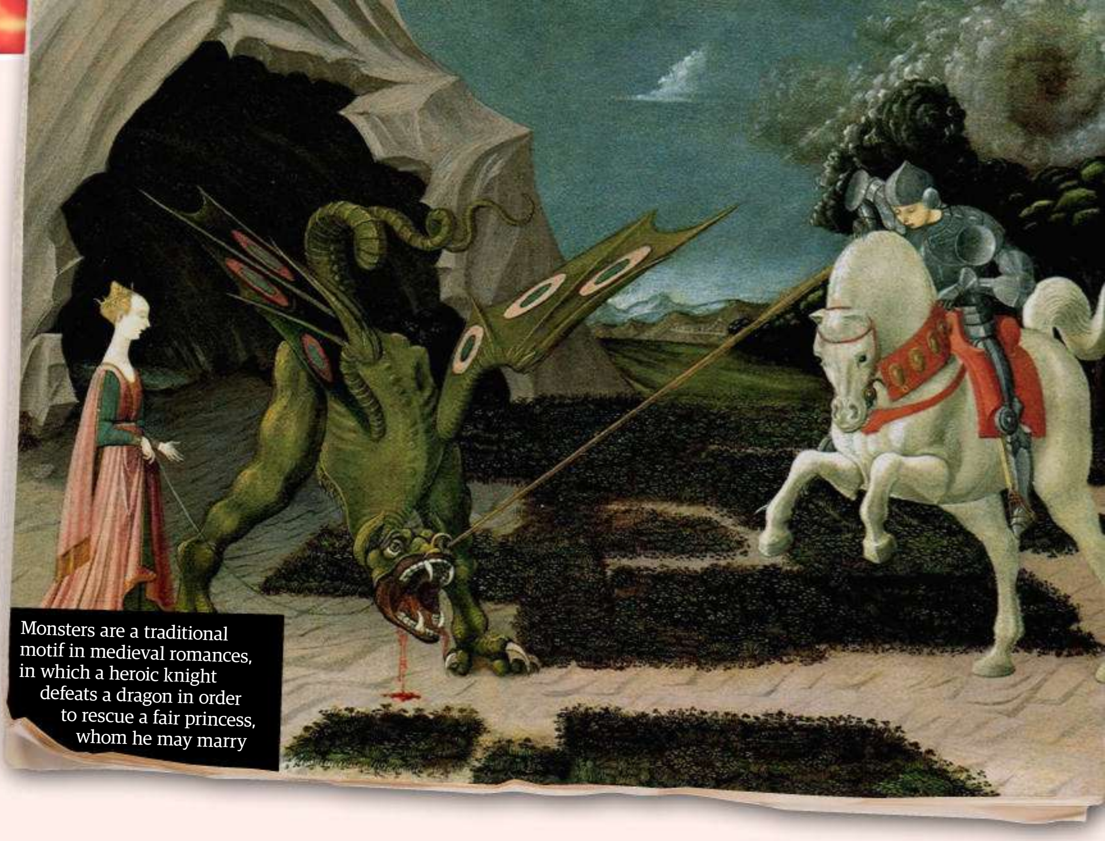
THE UNNATURAL HISTORY OF MONSTERS

There is no way of knowing what the earliest humans thought about monsters, but as soon as writing developed monsters made an immediate appearance. Stories about Gilgamesh, first written down around 2100 BCE but orally composed earlier, were later brought together into the

> "A monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature"



From the earliest times humans have seen the world as full of monstrous and miraculous beasts as this ancient Persian griffin-lion shows



Monsters are a traditional motif in medieval romances, in which a heroic knight defeats a dragon in order to rescue a fair princess, whom he may marry

famous Epic of Gilgamesh and feature a number of creatures that are recognisably monstrous. In it, the fearsome goddess Ishtar threatens that unless she gets what she wants:

"I will knock down the Gates of the Netherworld,
I will smash the door posts, and leave the doors
flat down, and will let the dead go up
to eat the living!
And the dead will outnumber the living!"

Thus zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films. What was it that Ishtar wanted? She desired the Bull of Heaven, a huge and vicious beast, to attack Gilgamesh. When the hero defeats the bull his troubles with monsters are not over. He later has to face Humbaba the Terrible, a giant tasked with guarding the valuable cedar forests. Even before these tales were written down we can find traces of them in the sculptures and art of pre-literate peoples. Who knows what monsters are lurking around nameless simply because no one wrote them down?

Evidence points to Gilgamesh being a real king of Uruk but it is unlikely that he ever really fought monsters or gods. Later generations created foes of sufficient ferocity for a mighty king to fight.

HEROES AND MONSTERS

The idea of populating the past with monsters is a trope found in many cultures. The deeds of the heroes of the past become more magnificent if done in the face of supernatural enemies.

The epics of Homer offer a window on Greek culture before writing. The archaic period of Greece was a chaotic one with a patchwork of kingdoms where, later Greeks believed, the heroic offspring of their gods contended with monsters on a regular basis. Homer's *Odyssey* devotes several books to the various monsters that the wily Odysseus had to overcome. Odysseus, renowned as a man who told lies and told them well, regales us with stories of his own cleverness. Trapped in the cave of a cyclops he blinds the giant and rides out strapped to the underside of a sheep. In a decade of wandering the seas Odysseus loses his entire crew to various monsters and the whims of the gods, yet he himself survives. Even this early in the development of monster tales, we must question what we are hearing. Odysseus is a known weaver of fabulous stories. Should we be cheering his successes or pondering whether monsters exist at all?

While Odysseus makes us question the nature of monsters, Greek myth also gives us more straightforward tales of them. Heracles could not be more different to Odysseus. Heracles never met a problem that could not be overcome with brute strength and his trusty club. In the course of his 12 famous labours Heracles must capture the preternaturally swift Ceryneian hind of Artemis, slay the vast Nemean lion, steal the human-eating horses of Diomedes, and slay the multi-headed Hydra. In this myth we see all the varieties of monster on display.

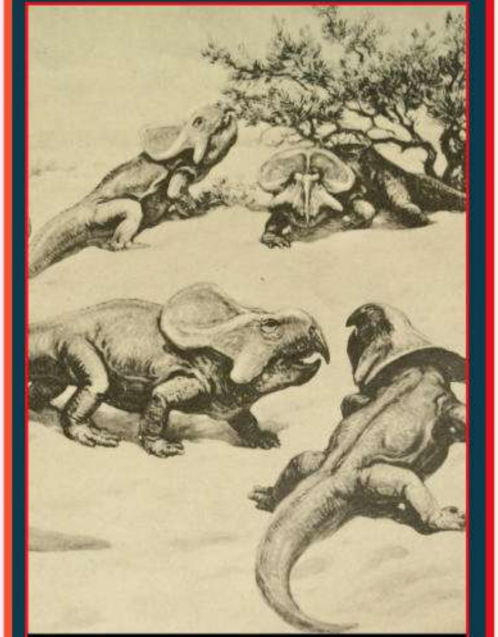
Some, like the Nemean lion, are simply over-mighty versions of real animals. Others, like the horses of Diomedes, transcend the nature of the average horse. In the Hydra, whose heads regrow more numerous than ever unless cauterised, we see the true mythological monster, one that never has existed.

"Zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films"

BONES OF MONSTERS

On the beaches of Whitby, UK, locals often found strange stones. Coiled and black, they looked like nothing so much as petrified snakes. These so-called 'Snake Stones' were explained as snakes driven out by St Hilda when she built an abbey there and punished the serpents by turning them to stone. In fact they are ammonites, fossilised and extinct molluscs, but they show the deep links that can exist between fossils and folklore.

The most impressive fossils, such as those of dinosaurs, created the most impressive monsters. In Mongolia, the ancients believed, lived griffins – a fearsome and powerful creature with the body and limbs of a lion but the beaked head of an eagle. Some believe this creature came into being when local people discovered the remains of protoceratops, a lion-sized dinosaur with a beaked mouth. More recent fossils such as those of elephants may have led to the idea of a cyclops as the nasal cavity of their skulls looks like one large eye socket. Fossilised footprints also found their way into folklore. These trackways, impressed into solid stone, were thought to be left by magical creatures. In China they were sometimes considered to be the tracks left by dragons. Others thought the three-toed footprints of therapods belonged to huge and heavenly chickens.



Fossils may have inspired many legends of mythical beasts. The beaked dinosaur protoceratops may be the basis of the griffin

Later epics would also use monsters to reveal the heroism of their protagonists. In the Anglo-Saxon poem, the eponymous Beowulf must again and again face dreadful beings. He describes how he swam for five days and nights in the ocean carrying a sword and defeating nine sea monsters. In the course of the poem, Beowulf will fight with the wild Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon. While Beowulf defeats the dragon he is mortally injured. Heroes cannot always escape unscathed from their battles. Yet it is Grendel, a wild man, who is best remembered as Beowulf's enemy. He cannot stand the sound of singing from a mead hall and so attacks it at night and slaughters those inside. Grendel is perhaps most memorable as he is most like a human. The author of *Beowulf* gives Grendel an excuse for his beastly behaviour - he is a descendent of the first murderer, Cain.

SYMBOLIC BEASTS

Grendel is just one example of a monster being used symbolically in folklore. Clearly he is meant to stand for all those who live outside the community, as he does not join in either their worship or their celebrations. When it comes to other monsters though, their symbolic value is defined not just by their nature but by the cultural atmosphere in which they are discussed.

In the Christian Middle Ages of Europe, one of the most popular genres of book was the bestiary. Often lavishly illustrated, these tomes would reveal the strange wonders of nature to their readers. While some creatures we designed for entertainment (such as the bonnacon, which defended itself by projectile defecating) other entries were designed to teach culturally appropriate lessons. The phoenix was long known in many cultures but in European bestiaries its fiery death and rebirth was paralleled to Jesus' resurrection. The bestiaries also freely mixed legendary with real animals. Pelicans are real but they do not, as bestiaries suggested, feed their young with their own blood, no matter how well it stands in for the Eucharist.

Unicorns were another favourite beast in many cultures. Known from the ancient world and the Bible, the unicorn found a key role in medieval mythology. Representing the incarnation of Jesus they could only be trapped by a female virgin, who in turn represented the Virgin Mary. Other cultures found the unicorn less mystical and their authors simply describe the unicorn as a horned horse. Marco Polo thought he had encountered one, which he described as being huge and grey, with a black horn and a penchant for rolling in mud and ooze. Despite looking nothing like the courtly unicorns of Europe, Polo was only able to interpret the reality of a rhino by linking it to the unicorn he expected.

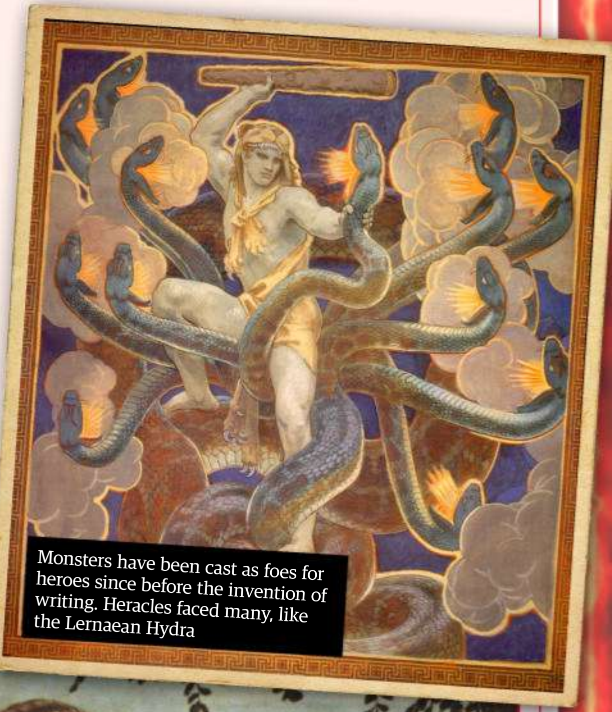
Perhaps the most widespread legendary animal is the dragon. Beasts that can be called dragons are found in ancient Mesopotamia, the Bible, and ancient Chinese tales, among many others.

Proto-Indo-European legends of a serpent slain by a hero have found their ways into many mythologies. Over time the meaning of the dragon has evolved along with the physical attributes dragons are supposed to have.

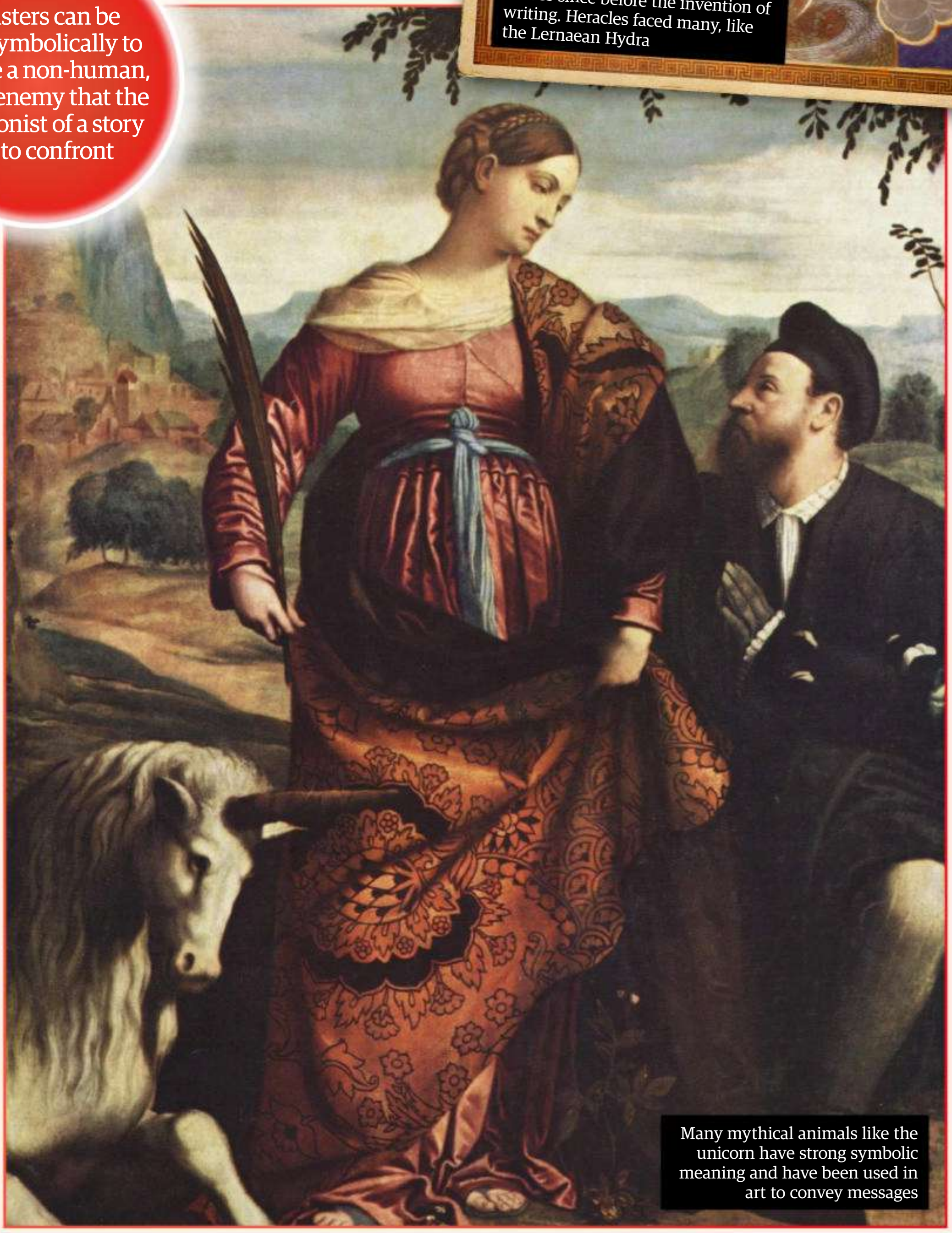
In the East dragons are often shown with a snake-like body but with four clawed limbs. They represent wisdom and excellence, with the Emperors of China appropriating them as a symbol of their power. These dragons are strongly associated with water and the vagaries of weather and are even credited with its control.

In the West the ancient serpents became winged reptiles, some

Monsters can be used symbolically to provide a non-human, 'other' enemy that the protagonist of a story has to confront



Monsters have been cast as foes for heroes since before the invention of writing. Heracles faced many, like the Lernaean Hydra



Many mythical animals like the unicorn have strong symbolic meaning and have been used in art to convey messages able to breathe flames, which were used as a test of heroism for knights. These dragons had a habit of hoarding gold and jewels and kidnapping beautiful, usually royal, maidens.

While the Eastern dragons might impart wisdom, the Western dragon was simply a step in the hero's path to glory. Many holy men, such as St George, showed their saintly status by slaughtering a dragon. St Margaret was one of the few women to free themselves from the grasp of a dragon. Of course, in her case, it was not simply a dragon that she slew, but the Devil himself.

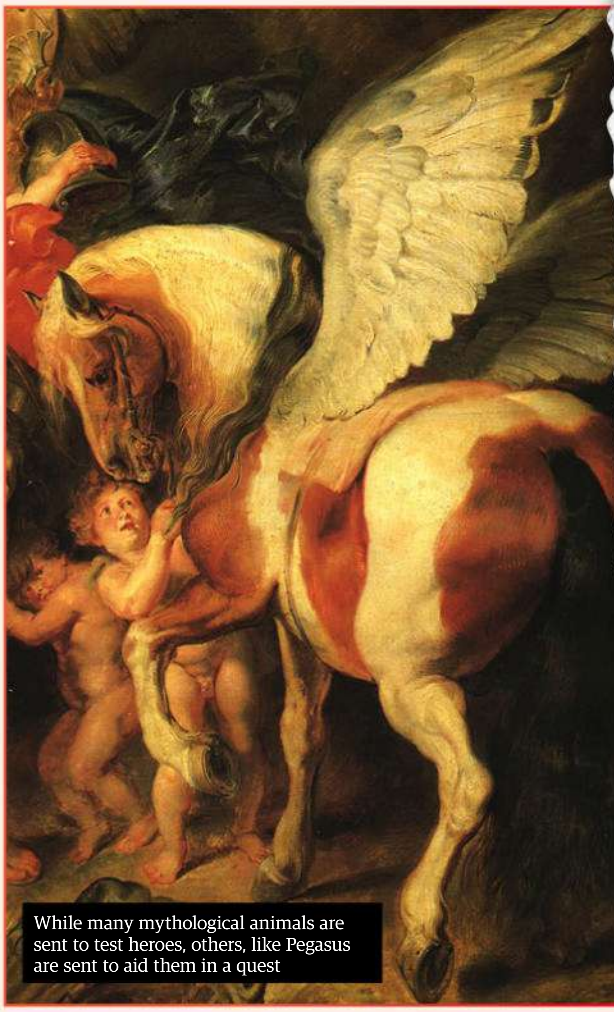
BEASTS BELOW US

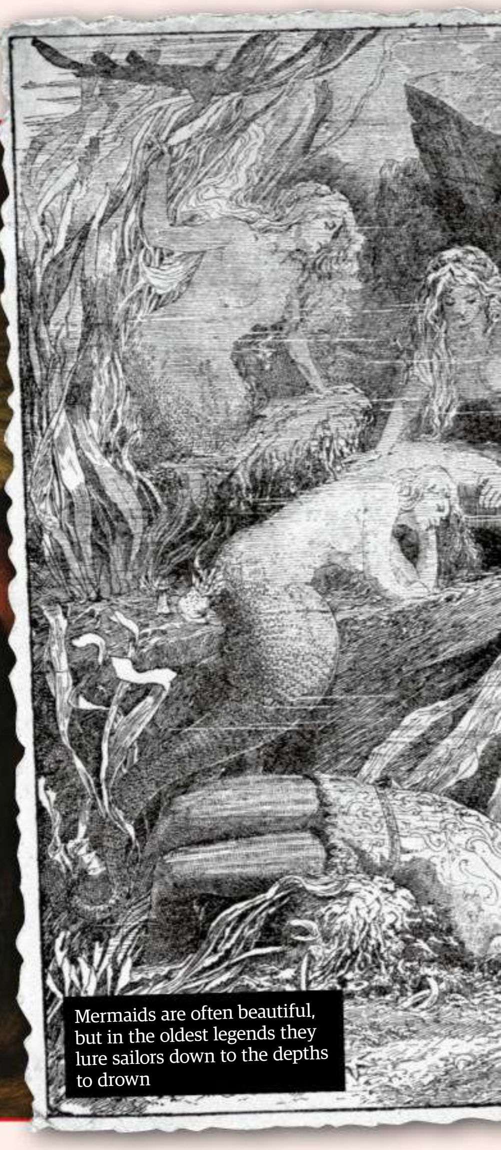
Images of St Margaret often show her emerging from the belly of a dragon having prayed her way out. The idea of monsters as aspects of the diabolical are as widespread as the idea of monsters. The Devil is hardly ever shown as the epitome of beauty he possessed before the fall but is instead depicted as a monstrous figure. The archangel Michael tramples him in the form of a dragon. Other Christian images of the Devil give him animal features such as bull's horns, a goat's legs, or porcine features. The mixing of species God had created was just another one of the Devil's perversions.

Monsters can represent the unknown because we so rarely see them for ourselves. It is no wonder then that the afterlife, of which we can have no direct knowledge, is often associated with dreadful creatures. The dark deities that rule over the dead in polytheistic religions are often depicted as monsters.

Hel in Norse myth is physically half a living woman and half a rotting corpse. Apep in Egyptian belief is part hippo, part crocodile, and part lion, and waits to devour the souls of those found unworthy of eternal life.

The placing of the Devil in Hell along with his deformed demons demonstrates how monsters toyed with God's creation. By mixing aspects of his perfect animals, demons and hellish beasts were thought of as insults to the deity. While non-existent monsters may be able to deal with the abuse heaped on them, this belief in the devilish nature of the deformed could have disastrous consequences for humans. Anyone with a birthmark or a disability could be viewed as ungodly.


While many mythological animals are sent to test heroes, others, like Pegasus are sent to aid them in a quest


Mermaids are often beautiful, but in the oldest legends they lure sailors down to the depths to drown

MONSTERS IN NATURE

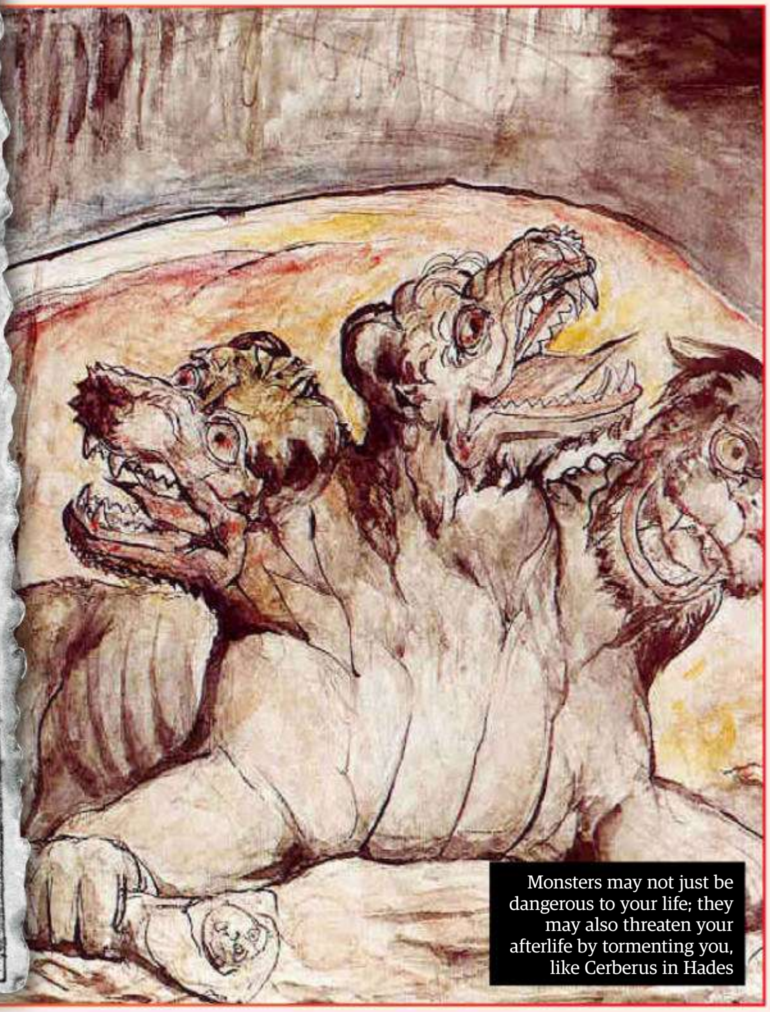
Monsters in myth and legend often have a meaning related to the narrative. There are other types of monster though, which were either thought to be real or that had evolved from nature itself. Where humans are relatively powerless they imagine other powers to be in control. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the legends of monsters inhabiting water and the sea. A sailor must face the truth that the abyss they glide over is infinitely more powerful than them. For those on the shore who never saw their loved ones return, they had to explain how it was that skilled mariners could be lost at sea.

Odysseus, whose travels we noted earlier, faced many such marine monsters. At one point he had to steer his ship between the monsters Scylla and Charybdis. These two lived on rocks separated by a narrow strait. To steer away from one put your ship within reach of the other. Scylla is described as a woman with a pack of dogs instead of legs, ravenous for human flesh. Charybdis, on the other hand, is not described and is far more terrifying for our ignorance of it. Odysseus is advised to sail closer to Scylla, for while she may snatch six men from the deck, Charybdis will smash the entire ship. In later mythology Charybdis came to represent a whirlpool that would suck down the unwary. Jason and the Argonauts had to face two cliffs that would crash together and crush a ship. Rocks and shoals have always been among sailors' worst foes.

Monsters are often used to symbolise the nature of evil, often represented as ugly, devouring, and unnatural

Mermaids, those beings mixed together from humans and fish, fulfilled a number of roles in sea folklore. In British folklore they are often omens of ill-luck and they lure men to their deaths, as they often do in African myths. The Hindu tale of Suvannamaccha, the golden mermaid, and Hanuman, shows mermaids as at first unhelpful beings, but love soon blossoms between the two and mermaids come to Hanuman's aid. Besides mermaids we find sea serpents, krakens, kelpies, and numerous other fantastic beasts populating the depths and explaining the untold numbers of unlucky sailors who disappeared at sea.

While monsters can sometimes be seen as representing some specific aspect of nature, in the absence of a rational explanation, others were simply thought to be a part of creation never seen before. To the ancient mind the world was inhabited with a near-infinite variety of beasts. Herodotus has been called both the Father of History and the Father of Lies. His research led him to look into all aspects of the world he sought to describe, and he did not hesitate to include monsters. According to him the lands beyond those known to the Greeks were swarming with unusual creatures. In the deserts of the east, he said you would find huge and hairy ants that in digging up their nests



Monsters may not just be dangerous to your life; they may also threaten your afterlife by tormenting you, like Cerberus in Hades

> *"To the ancient mind the world was inhabited with a near-infinite variety of beasts"*

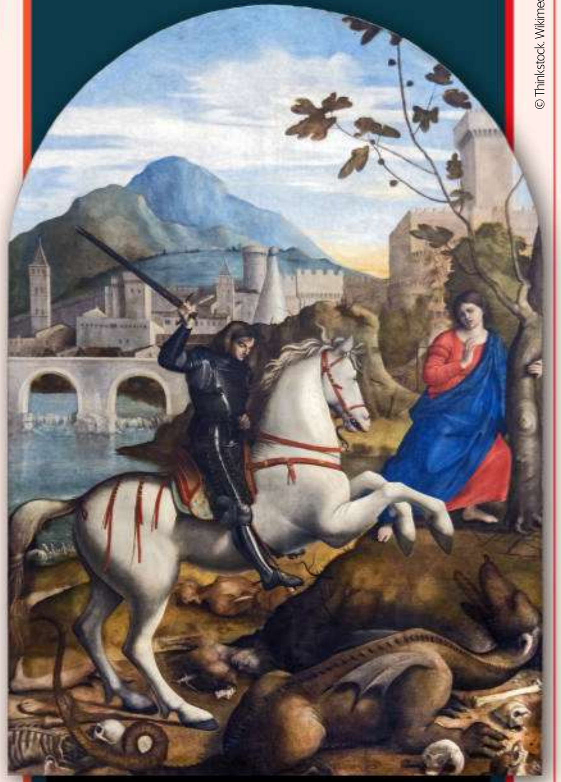
would reveal deposits of gold. Some believe he was passing on a garbled description of marmots, who indeed do sometimes dig up gold when they burrow. This is an example of how monsters can be born from half-heard information from far away. Other legendary beasts in Herodotus' writings clearly come from the tendency of humans to fill in the unknown areas of maps with "Here be dragons". In the wilderness beyond Libya he places dog-headed men, and humans with eyes in their chest. Even when Herodotus heard of things he could not believe in (such as goat-legged men, and tribes of werewolves) he always included them, as he knew his audience would love to hear about them. Herodotus knew that the human appetite for the monstrous is an eternal part of our nature and a subject that will always fascinate us.

WHY HUMANS MAKE MONSTERS

Monsters will always be with us. No fantasy book or film can escape their symbolism. We will always look at nature and wonder what else could have been created. Monsters reflect the human need to shape the world in our image and that is why monsters have always existed as a motif in myth and fairy tale. The Big Bad Wolf tells our children that the world is a scary place and that they must not stray. Monsters are always beings that transgress in some way and bend the natural order of things and so work to show people what is normal and acceptable. That may be an overly pessimistic view of monsters and other beasts however. It may be that legendary creatures are meant to spur us to always see what is on the other side of the hill and discover new wonders. And perhaps the most important lesson taught to us by tales of monsters is not that the world is full of terrible things – we all already know that – but that with bravery and fortitude, we can overcome them.

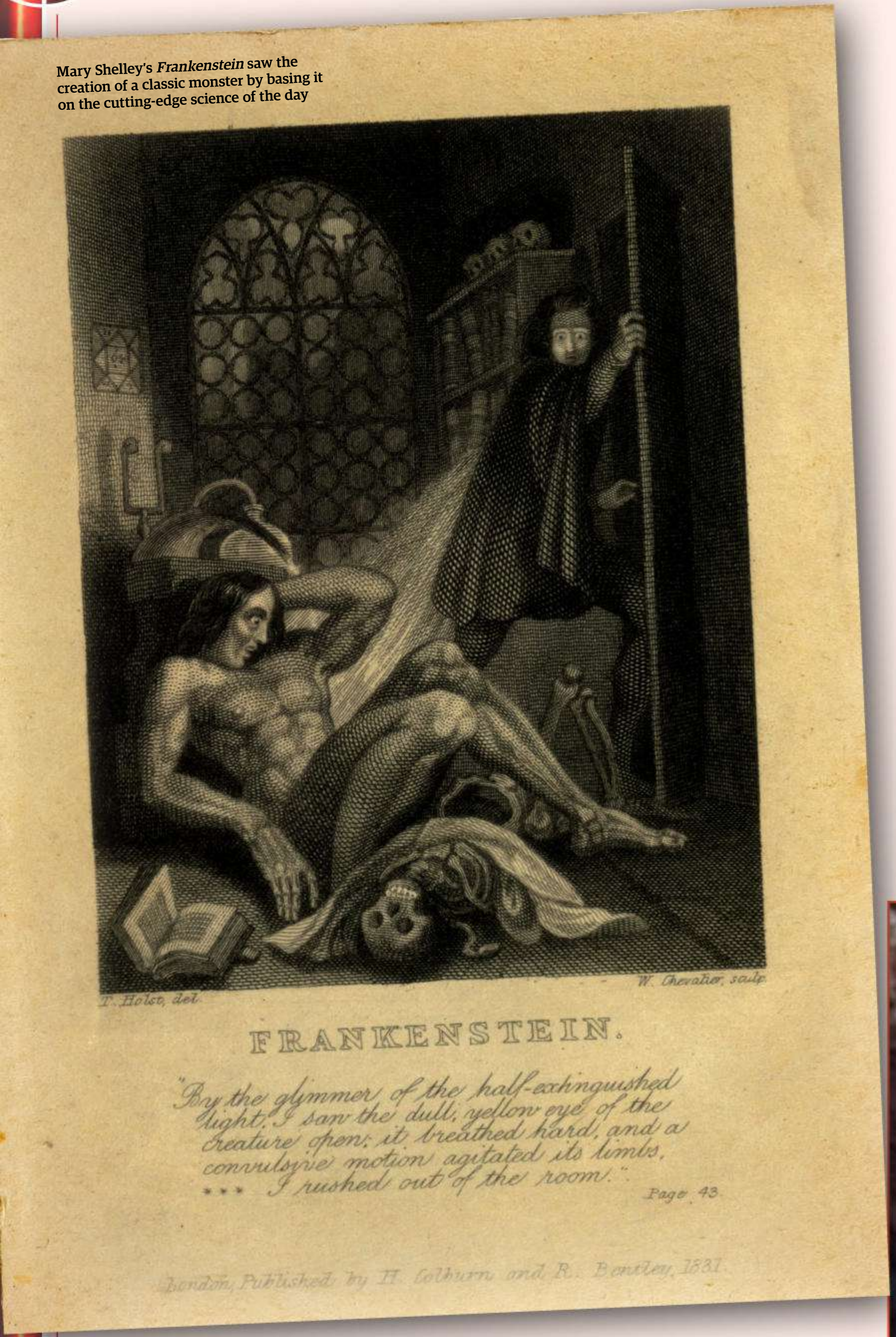
THE DRAGON HUNTERS

Dragons in the West have always been a favoured foe for heroes. When Heracles was tasked with recovering the golden apples of the Hesperides he first had to overcome the hundred-headed dragon Ladon that coiled itself around them. The idea of dragons gathering hoards of wealth made them a tempting target, but their inhumanity made them excellent fodder for folk tales. Since a dragon is not a person they may be slain with impunity. In Germanic myth, wingless dragons called lindworms could be found in barrows guarding cursed treasure. In the Norse stories of Sigurd, the hero must retrieve treasure from a dragon called Fafnir. Instead of charging in and fighting him directly, Sigurd digs a trench and waits for the dragon to slither overhead before disembowelling him. Later heroes used force instead of cunning to prove themselves against dragons. The Christian ideal of a knight often saw them having to rescue maidens from the clutches of a dragon. St George is the most famous dragon slayer in Western art but his myth borrows heavily from the legend of Perseus and Andromeda, which predates the notion of chivalry by millennia.



Dragons have always been the favoured beast for brave knights to fight, especially if a maiden requires rescuing

© Thinkstock; Wikimedia Commons; Public Domain; Creative Commons; Didier Descouers.


T. Holst, del.
W. Chevalier, sculp.
FRANKENSTEIN.
"By the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull, yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.
*** I rushed out of the room."
Page 43
London, Published by H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831

Mary Shelley's ***Frankenstein*** **saw the creation of a classic monster by basing it on the cutting-edge science of the day**

MONSTERS OF FICTION

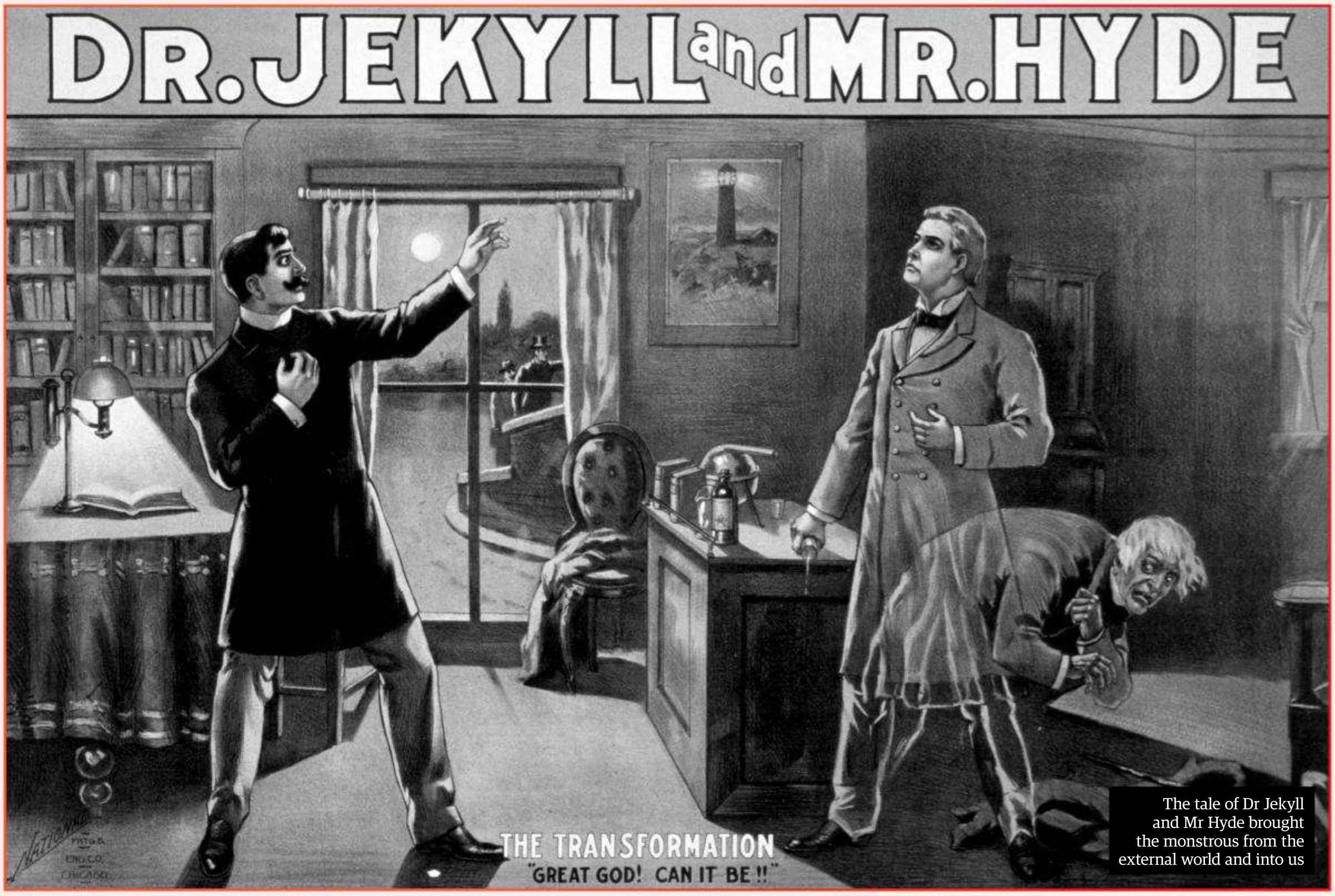
While ancient monsters often served to reinforce societal norms or offer a chance for heroic growth, the modern monster can reinforce the powerless nature of humanity in the face of the unknown. In Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* two servants are scared out of their wits by the appearance of a giant foot. This is not the beginning of *Monty Python* but instead the origin of the Gothic in literature.

The Castle of Otranto was published in 1764 and began the mania for Gothic tales of horror. In the story, which takes place in a crumbling castle riddled with ghosts and curses, a giant armoured spirit stalks the dark halls. Despite all the best efforts of the characters the ghost returns. "A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand." As the ghost destroys the castle the characters are left to ponder what has happened. How do you fight a ghost? And how can you fight fate itself?

The apotheosis of the Gothic novel and its monsters was reached in Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*. When a callow young medical student named Victor Frankenstein embarks on a mission to create life he transgresses against nature and lets lose a force he cannot control. The monster he creates in the novel is a thinking and feeling creature but marked by the unnatural method of his creation. Thrown into a life he never asked for the monster hunts down his uncaring creator.

Monsters like the vampire Dracula explore both human fears of death and the differences of class and economic power

> *"The monster of Frankenstein shows a deeper psychological insight than many that appear in mythology and folklore"*


DR. JEKYLL and MR. HYDE
THE TRANSFORMATION
"GREAT GOD! CAN IT BE !!"
NATIONAL PTG. & ENG. CO. CHICAGO

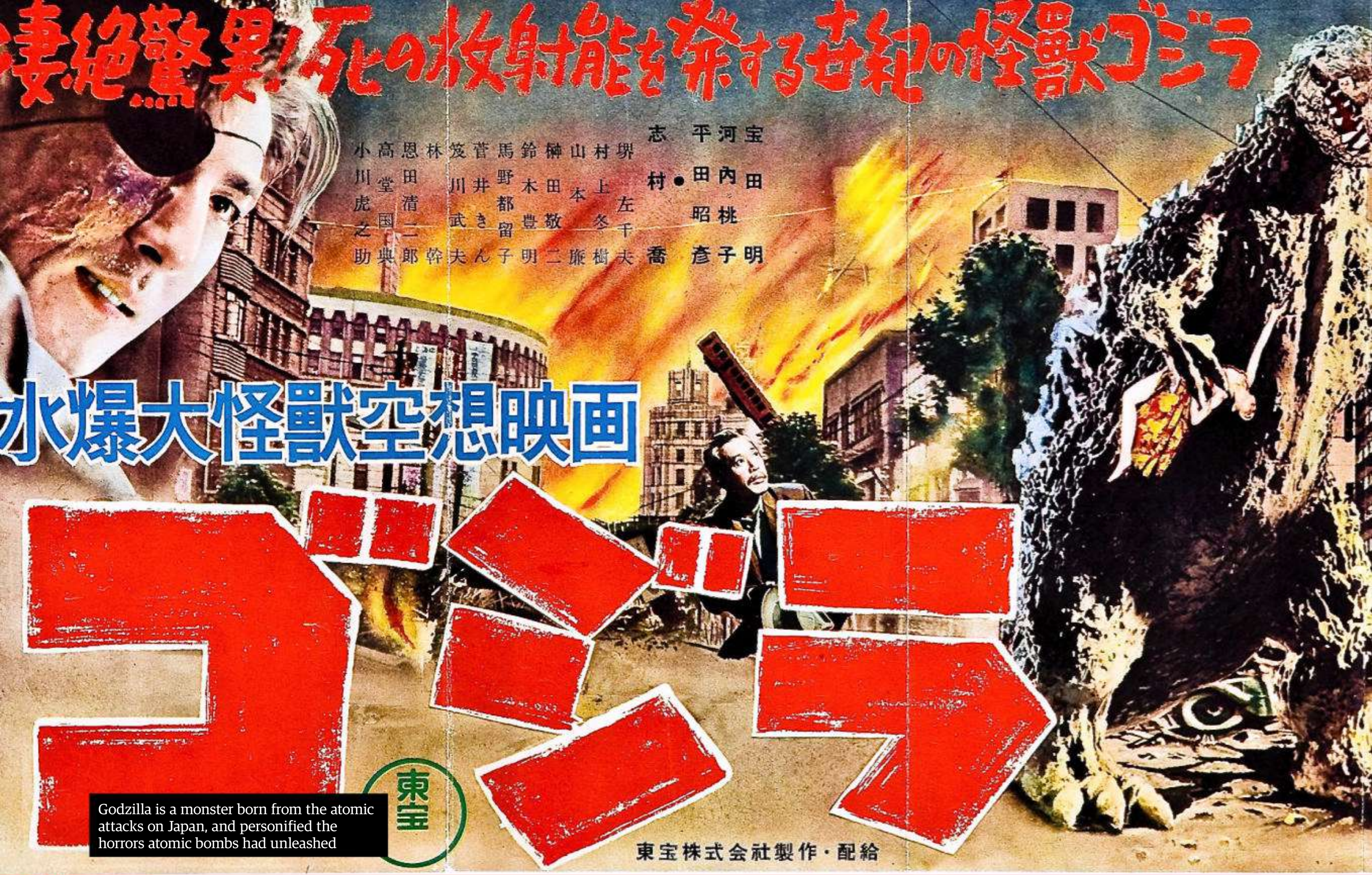
The tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde brought the monstrous from the external world and into us

Frankenstein was written in a time when science was making extraordinary advancements that seemed to push at the boundaries of what mortals should know. Luigi Galvani was performing experiments with electricity and frog legs that appeared to reanimate dead flesh. Victor Frankenstein's fictional experiments pulled what was considered God's creative power into human hands. Frankenstein was also appropriating the procreative powers of women to give birth into male hands. For that, narratively, he had to be punished. The monster of Frankenstein shows a deeper psychological insight than many that appear in mythology and folklore. He is a monster in that he is beyond nature but as a creation of a human he is a reflection of the human condition. You cannot blame his quest for revenge on primitive ignorance – this is a monster that reads Plutarch, Milton, and Goethe. The more he experiences of a humanity that utterly rejects him the more he comes to loathe them. The heart of the modern monster is the questioning of whether the creature or humanity is the real monster. Other authors took up the challenge of how to present monsters in literature. Guy de Maupassant wrote a short story called *The Horla* about bringing the monster within a single individual. In the tale a man is overcome by a psychic creature that latches on to him and causes him to do terrible things. Yet at first the protagonist cannot tell that it is an evil outsider making him do these crimes. Robert Louis Stevenson created a fully internal monster in his *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Jekyll uses a serum to transform himself into the monstrous Hyde. But it was not that Hyde performed evil deeds in opposition to Jekyll; the doctor had used the serum to indulge his base desires. Science can be put to wicked uses but the will to do evil is inside us.

Monsters are at the heart of Gothic fiction, which in turn influences modern-day stories, movies and TV shows

MONSTERS AND THE MOVING PICTURES

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde leapt from the pages of the book almost immediately. Stage adaptations soon came and in 1908 it became the first American


凄絶驚異！死の放射能を発する世紀の怪獣ゴジラ
宝田明
河内桃子
平田昭彦
志村●喬
堺左千夫
村上冬樹
山本廉
榊田敬二
鈴木豊明
馬野都留子
菅井きん
笈川武夫
林幹
恩田清二郎
高堂国典
小川虎之助
水爆大怪獣空想映画
ゴジラ
東宝
東宝株式会社製作・配給

Godzilla is a monster born from the atomic attacks on Japan, and personified the horrors atomic bombs had unleashed

horror film. While no copies of this original film survive, monsters have never since been absent from movie screens.

In the silent film era all the classic horror novels were plundered for monsters. Frankenstein's monster, the golem, and vampires were soon stalking audiences as black and white projections. As a means of mass entertainment monsters were a commodity but also a means of social commentary. No one paying a few cents for a movie ticket would fail to see the message behind an aristocratic count who literally drank the blood of poor people.

The real boom in monster movies began in the aftermath of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bombs. Once again humanity seemed to have transgressed and seized a power not meant for them. As punishment for their nuclear hubris humans are targeted by atomic monsters.

In 1953 the first of them emerged in the film *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* when the titular beast is awoken by a nuclear test and ravages towns and cities. This beast was not the only one to seek revenge for an atomic bomb. In Japan in 1954 the first *Godzilla* appeared. The director modelled the effects of 'Gojira' on the aftermath of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The texture of the reptile's skin was based on the horrific scars suffered by victims exposed to the blasts.

Humans had both created the monster and were the monsters. While nuclear weapons had woken up Godzilla and other monsters it also created some. In 1954's *Them!* ants mutated by the first atomic tests reach a monstrous size and begin to kill humans. Other films like *World Without End* and *Beginning of the End* saw radiation mutating ordinary spiders and locusts into monsters.

Sometimes modern horror films turn to ancient concepts to create their monsters. While hybrid creatures like the Sphinx and lamassu were produced by the supernatural, in *The Fly* it is science that crosses the boundaries of species. *The Fly* sees a scientist intent on inventing teleportation, only to find himself spliced with the DNA of a fly. Once again the monster is made internal as the scientist is transformed bodily into something entirely inhuman.

Outside of the adult horror genre we also find monsters in children's literature, TV, and films. Everyone has a monster that has haunted their dreams since childhood, yet children love to hear a monstrous story. Parents love to tell them because they can teach children potent lessons. If there is a troll under every bridge it will stop a child wandering off. You'll never take sweets from a stranger if there's a risk they might whisk you off to their gingerbread house in the woods.

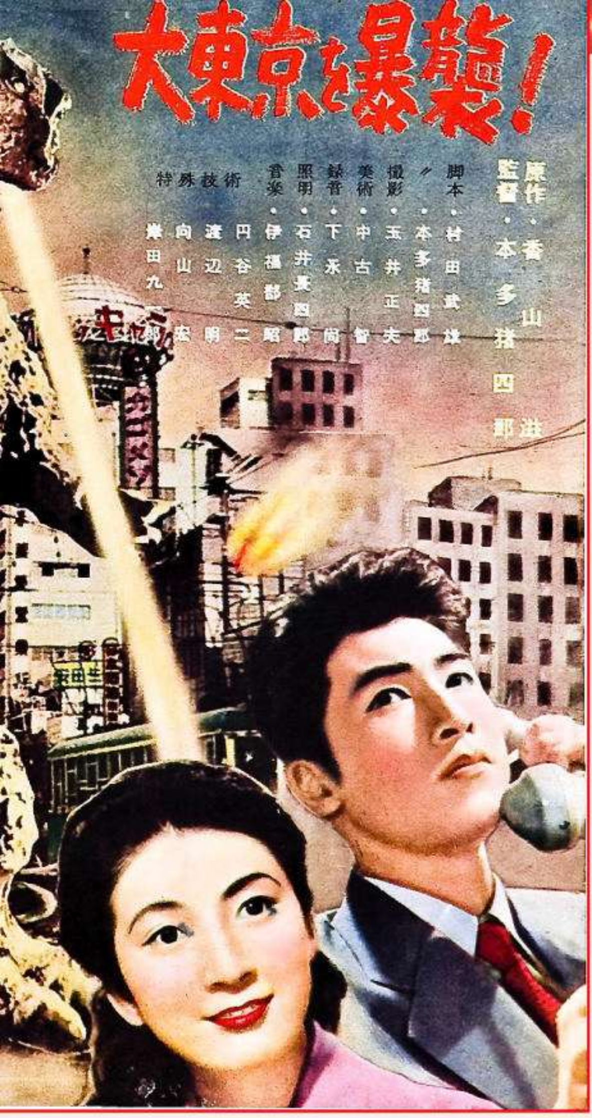
The monsters used in children's fiction also help to reinforce the sense of a group. 'Outsiders are dangerous' is at the heart of many monster tales. Monsters are also useful in a practical sense for film makers. It would never do for a child to see human blood, but if a monster is slain then censors will happily see their black blood splash about.

MONSTERS OF THE MIND

The medium may have changed but monsters have always been with us. Whether it was stories told around campfires or on huge and immersive movie screens there is something in the human mind that craves a monster.

Anthropologists who have studied various societies see how natural disasters and climactic events can give rise to monsters. An earthquake is one of the most terrifying events on Earth. Yet without knowledge of plate tectonics it is entirely inexplicable. No wonder that in many cultures it was thought that a monster must be to blame. In Japan earthquakes were blamed on a giant catfish called Namazu who caused the earth to shake with its thrashing. Volcanoes, storms, and tornadoes all found their explanations in the malevolence of monsters.

For Carl Jung there was a shared human subconscious that explained why certain images and motifs emerge again and again in world mythology. While the Hero is one of Jung's main archetypes there is also the Shadow. The Shadow is the embodiment of the aspects of one's personality they want to hide. As civilisation developed, the baser instincts of humans had to be suppressed. "Everyone carries a shadow and the less it is embodied in the individual's


大東京を暴襲！
原作・香山滋
監督・本多猪四郎
脚本・村田武雄
〃・本多猪四郎
撮影・玉井正夫
美術・中古智
録音・下永尚
照明・石井長四郎
音楽・伊福部昭
特殊技術 円谷英二 渡辺明 向山宏 岸田九一郎

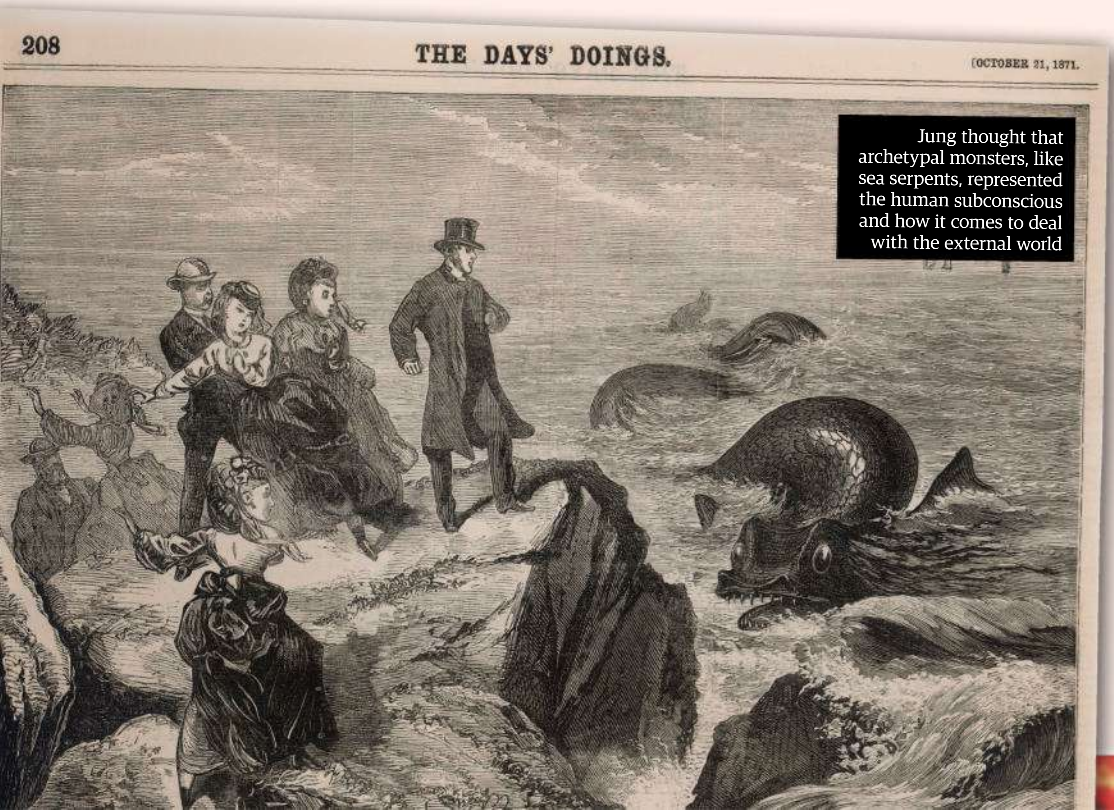
Jung believed that society created and shared archetypal phenomena, in which humanity's darker impulses are often symbolised by monstrous imagery

conscious life, the blacker and denser it is," Jung thought. By creating monsters humans are expressing feelings and fears they must otherwise deny.

The development of psychology as a science has been matched by an increasing complexity in the monsters we talk about. While early monsters were fairly simple aberrations of the natural order, modern monsters tend to be those that address our darkest fears. The Babadook of the 2014 film haunts so many viewers because it is the manifested shadow of depression and mental illness.

While science has banished many monsters from the map it seems that as long as there are humans there will be dark spaces where we project our fears and where something will always be lurking.

"Sometimes modern horror films turn to ancient concepts to create their monsters"

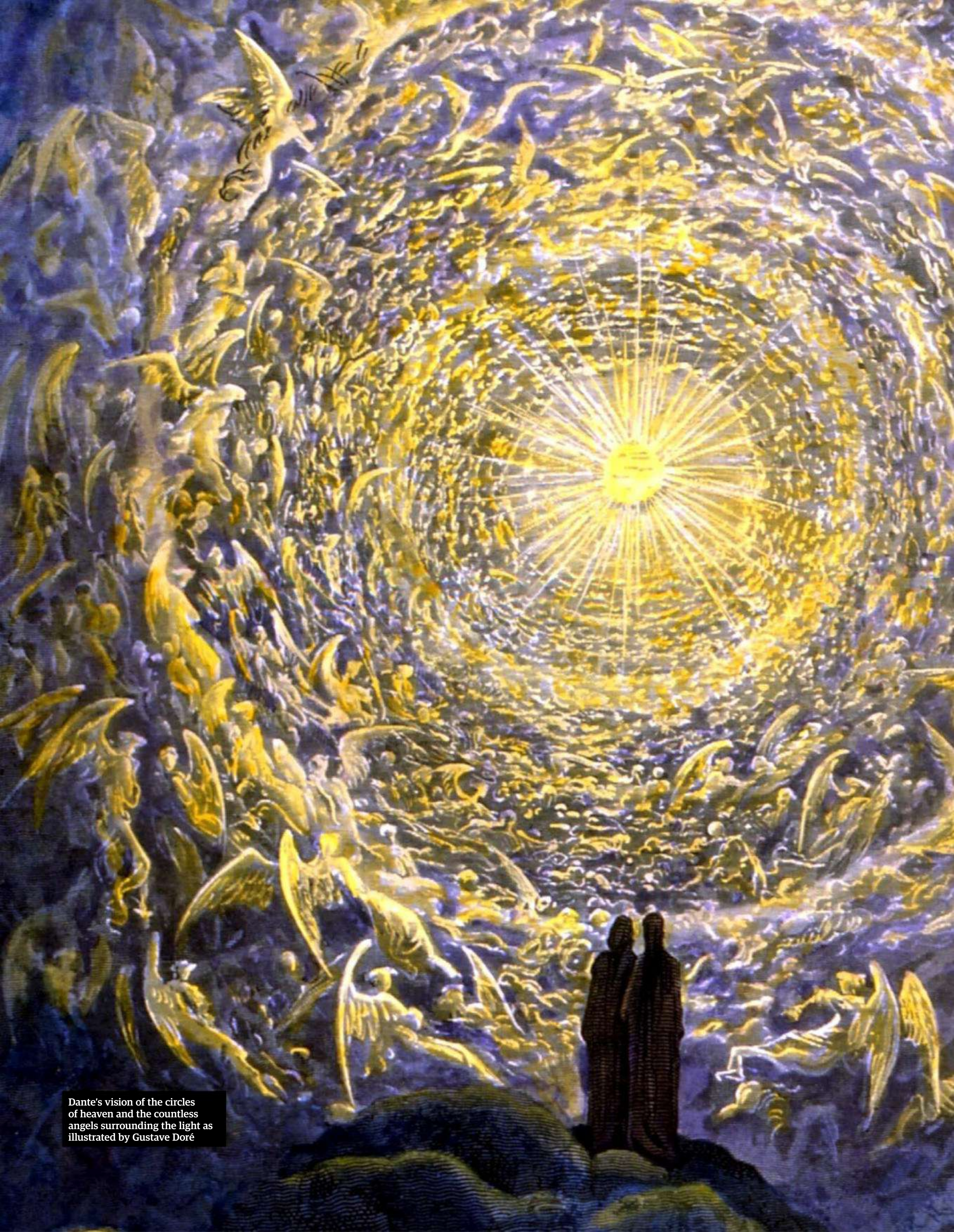

208
THE DAYS' DOINGS.
[OCTOBER 21, 1871.
Jung thought that archetypal monsters, like sea serpents, represented the human subconscious and how it comes to deal with the external world

NOT SO MONSTROUS MONSTERS

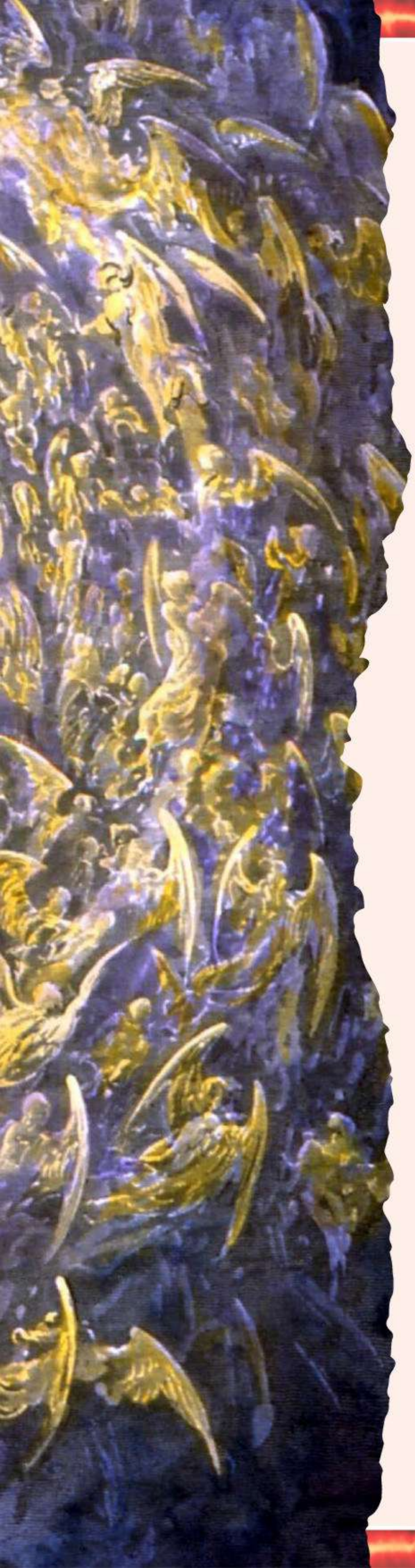
When a young boy called Max is called a "wild thing" by his mother and sent to bed, he instead sails away to an island full of really wild things with terrible teeth and terrible claws. Max subdues these monsters and becomes their king. But Max soon misses his loved ones and goes home. Maurice Sendak's book is just one of the ways that monsters have become decidedly friendly. While the bogeyman in the closet is nightmare-fuel for many children, some stories have made them lovable. *Monsters, Inc.* saw a whole society of monsters that generated power from the screams of children. When they discover that a child's laughter is even more powerful, they reorder their culture away from scares. The film also taught children that monsters were more scared of them than they were of monsters. Sometimes monsters can even be harnessed as pets and companions. While pokémon games and cartoons see elemental beings unleashing their powers against each other in fierce battles, the 'pocket monsters' are not unthinking beasts. Many episodes of the cartoon *Pokémon* resolve when humans and pokémon learn to coexist or develop friendships. Even the most terrible monster can be tamed, we tell children, if we just extend humanity to those who are different from us.

RIGGING
ROAR
ROAR
SCREAM
GRWR
R=G
YOU NEED A RIG TO ROAR!
Not all monsters are scary – some are designed to teach children that not all those who look different are beastly

Images source: Wiki/ Jonathan Deamer, John Bauer, Getty images, Alamy



Dante's vision of the circles of heaven and the countless angels surrounding the light as illustrated by Gustave Doré



Heavenly creatures

Far from being stuck far away in heaven, angels, it seems, are all around us…

Written by Edoardo Albert

Have you ever met an angel? Even if you haven't, it's likely that you know somebody who thinks they have. A recent study found that, worldwide, over a third of people have encountered angels in one form or another. Another study looked at over 800 accounts of angelic encounters in Britain. The people reporting these experiences were normal people to whom something extraordinary had happened.

And that's where the story of angels begins: with encounters between ordinary people and something or someone seemingly extraordinary.

The very first record of one of these encounters is in the first book of the Bible, the *Book of Genesis*. There, as the nomad Abraham sat by the flap of his tent in the plain of Mamre during the heat of the day, three men appeared to him. Knowing at once that these were not ordinary men, Abraham rushed to greet them and invited them to rest and eat in his tent. When they had done so, the strangers told Abraham that his wife, Sarah, who was as old as he, would bear him a son, even though she had been barren all her life and they were both too old to have children. Sarah, who was listening in on the conversation, laughed scornfully at this message. But sure enough, she did have a child, Isaac. The message came true.

ANGELS AS MESSENGERS

This reveals the first important aspect of angels: they appear, first and foremost, as messengers of God. Indeed, the very word, angel, comes from the Greek angelos, which translates malach, the Hebrew word for 'messenger'. As such, when angels were first mentioned in myth and scripture, they were anonymous because it was not the identity of the angel that mattered, it was their message.

However, over the course of the centuries, and as people thought more about these encounters with strange messengers, some of the messengers acquired names. Two or three angels are named in the Bible (the third appears in the *Book of Tobit*, which is included in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles but excluded from Protestant and Hebrew Bibles). They are Michael, Gabriel and, in *Tobit*, Raphael. Gabriel also appears in Muslim thought, where he is the angel who conveys the Quran to the prophet Muhammad.

Cementing the key angelic role as a conveyer of messages, Gabriel, the most famous of all the angels, conveyed the news to an ordinary young girl in Nazareth that she was to bear a child, despite being a virgin, and that her son would reign over the house of David in a kingdom without end. For a poor girl in an obscure Jewish town under Roman rule, this was quite a lot to take in.

And that reveals another aspect of angelic messengers: their messages are often difficult to interpret at the time, although they usually become clearer with the passage of events. But that the message needs to be taken seriously is made clear by the gravity of the encounter. Angels have weight.

> While we might envision cherubs as harp-holding winged babies today, the biblical cherubim (meaning "close") are the highest order of angels

MEETING ANGELS

People don't just meet angels in the Bible or other scriptures. These encounters have happened through the centuries and continue today. William Blake, the most visionary of all English artists, as an eight year old walking across Peckham Rye, saw "A tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough

Image source: Getty; Alamy

like stars." His visions continued throughout his life and his continuous attempts to convey what he saw brought a strange, luminous life to his poems and paintings.

But it's not just geniuses who meet angels. Ordinary people do as well. When researcher Emma Heathcote-James advertised for reports of angelic encounters, she had over 800 responses in the UK. Analysing the results, she found that in just over 31 per cent of these encounters, the angel appeared in traditional, white-robed form. For 17 per cent of the responders the angel was in human form. For the rest, the angelic encounter was sensory: a physical sensation, a scent, a sound, light or an internal sensation.

When angels appear in human form they usually give a warning or rescue someone from danger but when the relieved subject turns to thank them, they have disappeared. In one case, two hikers lost on a mountain saw ahead a white-robed figure (this was in the Middle East, so robe wearing Bedouins are normal) who led them to safety but then disappeared before they could thank him.

In other reports, an angel might intervene physically to prevent a disaster. One respondent, about to step out into the road without looking, reported being physically pulled back just as a car passed in front of her, only for there to be no one there. Angels can also manifest themselves through scent, usually as the most beautiful perfume you've ever smelled.

For those people who meet angels, the encounter is significant and, usually, deeply personal; not something to speak about lightly. Among the respondents, a significant minority described themselves as atheists or agnostics, so such meetings are not confined to people who might expect to meet angels.

There's no better illustration of how angels have moved into popular culture than Clarence Odbody in *It's a Wonderful Life*, who shows a despairing James Stewart what would have happened had he never lived

In *Wings of Desire*, angels wander through Berlin, recording what they see and hear, until one of them falls in love with a woman

> "Despite their powers, angels aren't gods. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam there is only one God"

WHAT IS AN ANGEL ANYWAY?

Angels can appear in awe and majesty, as apparently ordinary human beings, and as light, sensation, sound. So they're not normal creatures. Their name tells their function, what they do, but it says nothing about what they are.

Firstly, despite their powers, angels are not gods. In the context of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, within which belief in angels arose, there is only one God. He creates everything, the Earth and the heavens, men and animals... and, of course, the angels. Angels are creatures, as we are, brought into existence by one greater than us.

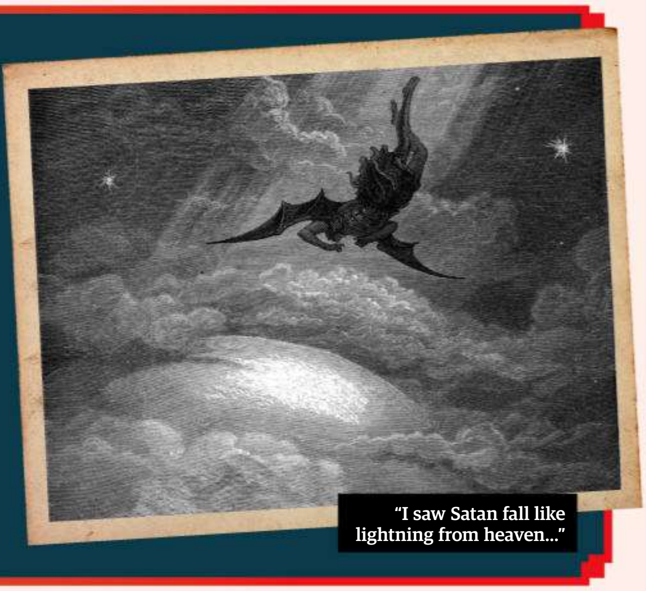
We are made of flesh and blood and bone, solidly material substances. But there is disagreement as to what angels are made from. Ancient Jewish thought has it that angels are made from fire. Muslim tradition suggests

"NOW WAR AROSE IN HEAVEN..."

Not all angels are good. Theology also allows for those who fell from God's grace

While angels arose in light, not all of them remained there. In the garden, Adam and Eve fell when tempted by the snake 'more subtle than any other wild creature'. In the *Book of Job*, the adversary ('satan' in Hebrew) attempts to break Job. Later, the adversary and the snake are identified as the same being, 'that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan'.

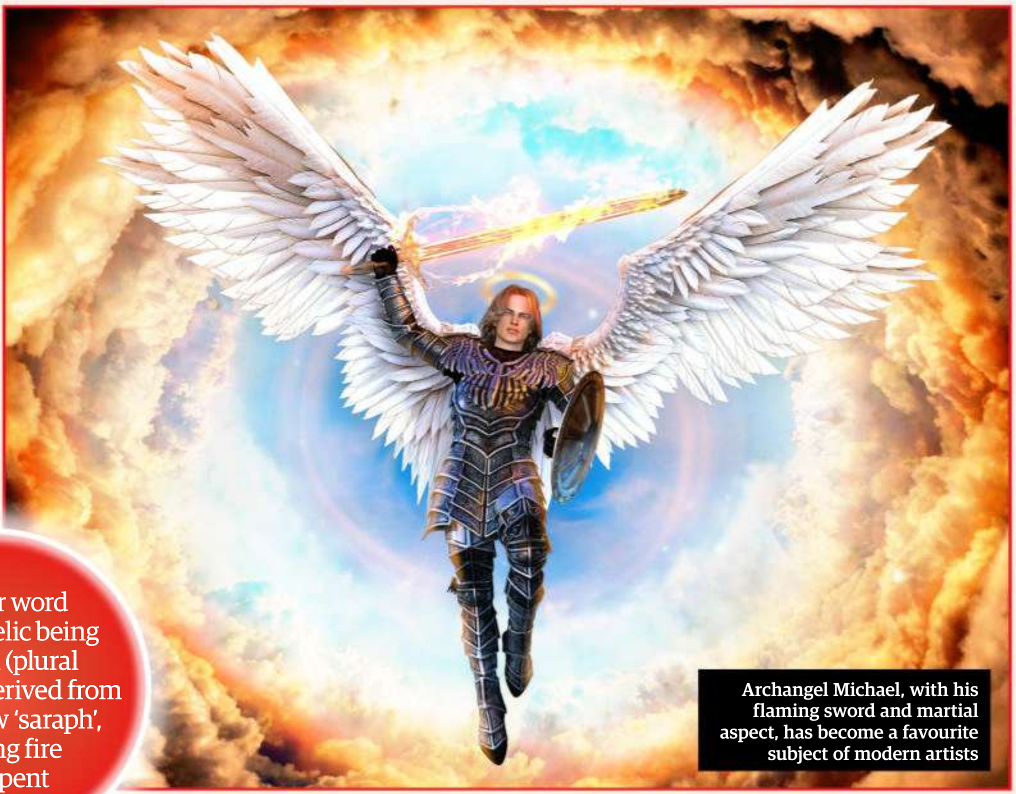
Who is the adversary? He is named as Lucifer, the brightest of the angels, who rebelled against God and was cast down from heaven along with all his followers by Michael. As creatures of pure spirit, although spirits now turned towards corruption, these dark angels can wreak havoc in this world, not by any measure equal to God - there is no comparison - but they have power and insight far greater than the human. However, their power caused their fall from grace. For when God placed before them the fresh fruit of his creation, human beings, Lucifer and his ilk were appalled at being asked to acknowledge such hybrid creatures and rebelled. What's more, as the brightest of the angels, Lucifer was proud, and that pride dragged him down to the deepest hell.



"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..."

that angels are made from light whereas jinn, another class of supernatural being unique to Islam, are beings of fire. Christian theologians have generally favoured the view of angels as creatures of light. However, in each case, these are metaphors rather than realities: an angel is not a wave function described by Maxwell's equations.

Rather, an angel is a spiritual creature, a being without a physical body, although they have the ability to take and manipulate physical forms. This spiritual essence humans share with angels, but we are hybrid creatures of spirit and matter whereas angels are pure spirit. Angels have no defining physical properties. Instead, each angel is a unique species, each as different from another as cats are from dogs. They are thus radically different from us.



Archangel Michael, with his flaming sword and martial aspect, has become a favourite subject of modern artists

THE DIFFERENT ORDERS OF ANGELS

While angels sometimes appear in human form, there are other descriptions of them where the witness appears to be trying to force words to convey a reality beyond their capacity to describe: angels as wheels, with six pairs of wings, with four bodies. If each angel really is a different species, then we would expect some to be so strange as to be impossible to describe. Those angels that have most to do with human beings would be the most human seeming, while others would be concerned with different matters.

Another word for an angelic being is seraph (plural seraphim) derived from the Hebrew 'saraph', meaning fire or serpent

Jewish, Muslim and Christian thinkers have suggested that there is a hierarchy among the angels. This idea was developed most fully by an anonymous 5th century monk who wrote under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. He argued that, since three is the most sacred number, there were three hierarchies among angels with each having three orders. The lowest hierarchy, and the one most concerned with human affairs, consisted of angels, archangels and principalities. The central hierarchy, which took care of nations and destinies, consisted of powers, virtues and dominions. The highest hierarchy, which looks towards God, contains thrones, cherubim and seraphim. By this logic, the named angels in the Bible, Gabriel, Michael and Raphael, rank as lowly archangels.

Not everyone accepts this, since Michael is named in *Revelation* as the captain of the hosts of heaven that contend against the devil. Michael has distinguished himself in human affairs too, in particular when a 12-year-old French girl named Joan had a vision of Michael telling her that she had been given the task of expelling the English from France. In one of the most extraordinary reversals in history, Joan persuaded the French king to accept her advice and the English were indeed defeated - although Joan herself was captured by the English and later executed.

So while the messages that angels bring are always important they are not always comfortable. Sometimes, they are downright dangerous. For angels are not like us, and they bear witness to realities of such stark beauty that they can strip the soul of all its illusions - and that is never a comfortable or easy process.

Image source: Getty; Alamy

Subtle bodies

Far from the jovial wish-granting genies of cartoons and pantomimes, belief in the chaotic and powerful jinn is still prevalent today

Written by April Madden

Picture a genie and you probably come up with a cheery wish-granting spirit summoned from a lamp, all manic whizz-bang magic and booming Robin Williams voice. In the folklore of the real world however, the Arabian jinn (or djinn) are darker and far more complex. Stories of these beings go back beyond the dawn of Islam, but they were absorbed into its cosmology as a third class of beings that were neither angel nor human, made not of flesh or pure spirit but having 'subtle bodies' made of 'smokeless fire'. They can be male or female, devout Muslims or idolatrous unbelievers, no shape or all shapes. Able to take the forms of humans and animals when they wish, they spend most of their time invisible and incorporeal, only physically incarnating when they wish to slake their all-too carnal hungers or lusts, or to make trouble – either on their own account or at the behest of a powerful sorcerer or witch who has enslaved them. All-powerful, they are nonetheless just as vulnerable as humans to trickery, flattery and deceit.

Modern jinn belief persists today throughout the Islamic world, despite the efforts of scholars and imams to stamp out this ancient folklore. Jinn are frequently believed to take on human shape in order to seduce young men and women. A jinn woman, or jinniyah, in human form is often betrayed by the deer hooves that round off her otherwise beautiful form: jinn are believed to never quite manage full human incarnation, always remaining a little bit animal. Abandoned houses are often believed to be haunted by unquiet jinn (they can be cast out for a high price), and sadly the physically or mentally ill are sometimes believed to be possessed by them, resulting in punitive attempts at exorcism instead of proper medical treatment. In the early days of the internet, so-called jinn photos (created in Photoshop) did the rounds on Arabic-speaking forums and social media, purporting to show candid snaps of the creatures as they haunted the edgelands of desert cities or spooked livestock and rural villagers. The Hamsa or Hand of Fatima motif in North Africa and the Middle East is believed to ward off not only the evil eye but the unwanted attentions of jinn too. The complex jinn are not all bad though: one story tells of a woman called Habba whose jinn husband Manzur taught her healing magic, while the ancient Arabian poets al A'sha and Thabit were both believed to have friendships with jinn, referring to them as their brothers.

The Hamsa, or Hand of Fatima symbol, and the colour blue, are still used today to ward off the evil eye and the intentions of malicious jinn

The stereotypical idea of a jinn is as the awesomely powerful spirit of the lamp in fairy tales like *Aladdin*

Image source: Getty; Alamy

> *“Modern jinn belief persists today throughout the Islamic world, despite the efforts of scholars and imams to stamp out this ancient folklore. Jinn are believed to take on human shape to seduce young men and women”*

Demons from hell

From earliest times many have feared that the world was populated by demons ready to attack humans and destroy them – either physically or spiritually

Written by Ben Gazur

Demons have long haunted humanity. These supernatural beings exist to torment people both in life and even after death. We all know them as something to fear but the definition of a demon is as twisty and mutable as demons are themselves. To examine demons we have to travel into the deep past.

THE HAUNTED PAST

The word demon is derived from the Greek word 'daimon'. To an ancient Greek there was nothing particularly fearsome about a daimon - in fact they could be handy to have around. Hesiod, a poet writing in the 7th century BCE, described how Zeus turned the first generation of humans into daimons.

"They are the good, the earthbound, the guardians of mortal humans,
They guard acts of justice and they guard against wretched acts of evil."

Pindar wrote about the glorious victors of the Olympic Games and spoke of daimons that watched over people's fates from their birth. The philosopher Socrates claimed that he had a daimon who spoke to him. This daimon would often tell Socrates not to do something if it would be impious.

In a certain sense daimons were a form of lesser god. They came to be personifications of abstract concepts. If you were lucky you might be visited by Euphrosyne, the spirit of Good Cheer. Of course if good things can be personified then so too can the bad things in life. The most feared daimon was Hybris - punisher of outrageous arrogance. Greek daimons could separated into the good spirits called eudaimons while their evil counterparts were the kakodaimons.

The Romans adopted many of these Greek daimons into their own pantheon but they also added spirits of their own. To the Roman mind any part of the natural world might be inhabited by a spirit known as a Genius Locii. The Genii of the Emperors would later be worshipped as gods in their own right - which some Christians found sacrilegious to the point of blasphemy. This sped the transformation of daimons and genii into our modern understanding of demons.

Older traditions of demons existed before the Greeks and Romans though. In Egypt the cosmos was divided between the ordered and the chaotic. The gods and pharaohs were on the side of order, but they were in constant battle with beings who sought to return the universe to disorder. The Egyptians had no word that corresponds directly to demon, but it is hard not to see these spirits who lived in the dark, smelled foul, and harmed humans, as demonic.

In the funerary texts of ancient Egypt there was a class of demon who guarded the portals of the afterlife. They were armed with weapons and pieced together from ferocious animals like hippopotami, scorpions, and crocodiles. They had names like 'Swallower of Sinners'. Their vivid physical descriptions helped the deceased to avoid them as they travelled through the afterlife.

The ancient Mesopotamians were also acutely aware of demons that could harm them. One inscription lists a few of them:

"The wicked Utukku who slays man alive on the plain. The wicked Alû who covers man like a garment. The wicked Etimmu, the wicked Gallû, who bind the body. The Lamashtu, the Labasu, who cause disease in the body."

These malevolent demons took monstrous forms such as humanoid figures with wings, claws, and razor sharp beaks. This imagery found across the Middle East would be influential for centuries on how people imagined demons.

DEMONS OF THE BIBLE

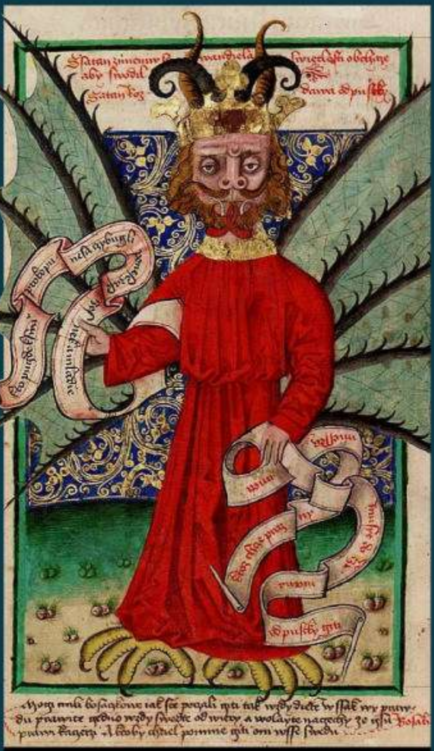
The names and concept of demons passed from Mesopotamia into Jewish literature. The Akkadian term Lilitu means 'spirit' and some see this as the source of Lilith, one of the oldest demons in Jewish tradition. Lilith was supposedly the first wife of Adam but when she refused to serve Adam she was replaced with the more compliant Eve. Lilith came to be one of the most feared demons in the Abrahamic tradition but far from the only one.

"They sacrificed unto demons, not to God." *The Book of Deuteronomy* describes as demons the old gods of Mesopotamia but it is out of the Bible that our modern conception of demons developed. The Old Testament actually has relatively few references to demons though. When God goes into battle in the *Book of Habakkuk* he is preceded by Reseph and Dever - Plague and Pestilence.

In the *Book of Tobit* the demon Asmodeus kills seven husbands of Sarah on their wedding nights. It is only when help is prayed for that the

> *"The Book of Deuteronomy describes as demons the old gods of Mesopotamia but it is out of the Bible that our modern conception of demons developed"*

SATAN PRINCE OF HELL



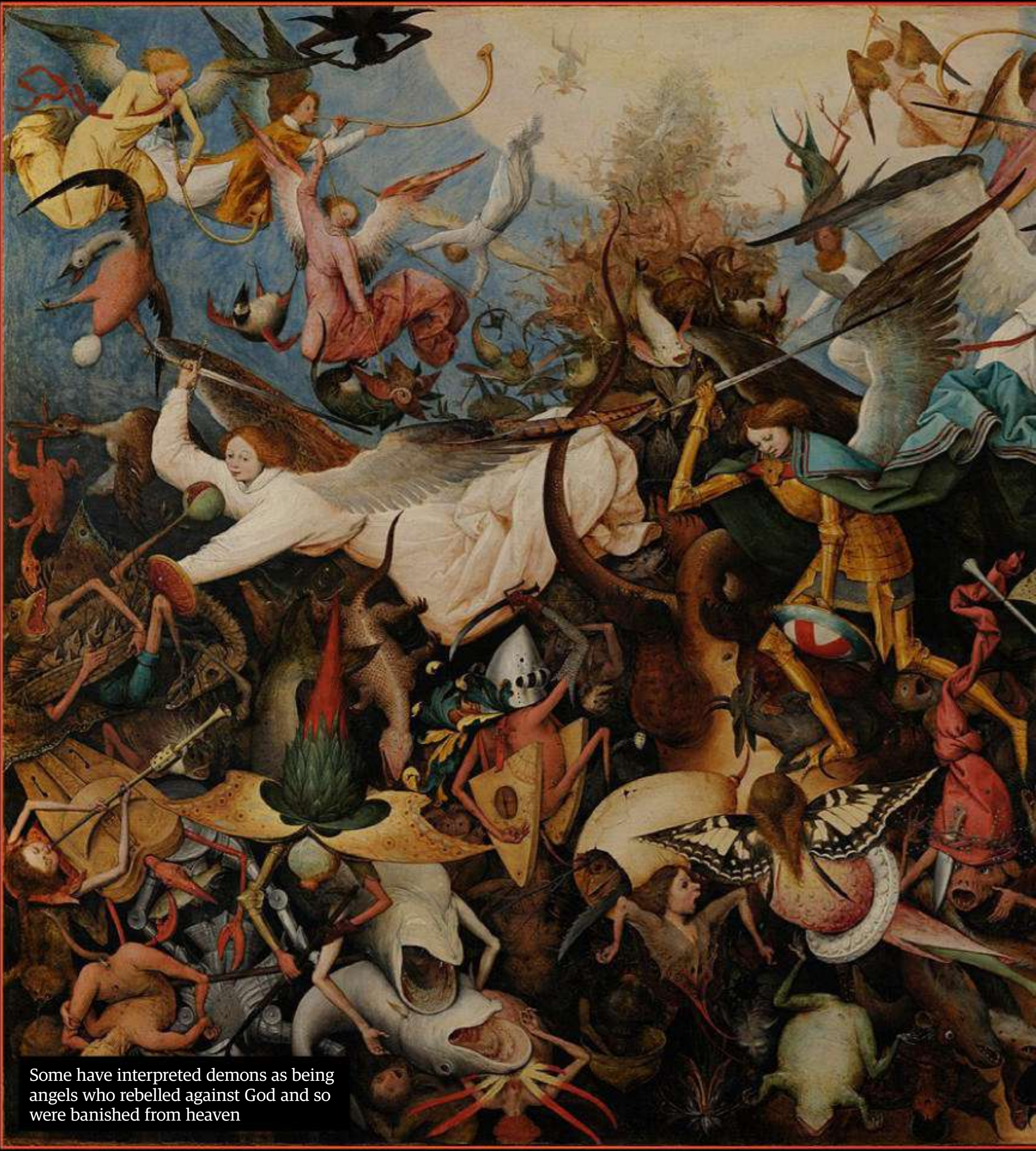
Our current conception of Satan borrows from many sources and not all religions agree on his importance, role, or even existence

The devil is one of the most recognisable figures in Western culture yet in religious texts he barely makes any appearances. One text from Ugarit describes how the great god El was once frightened by a demon:

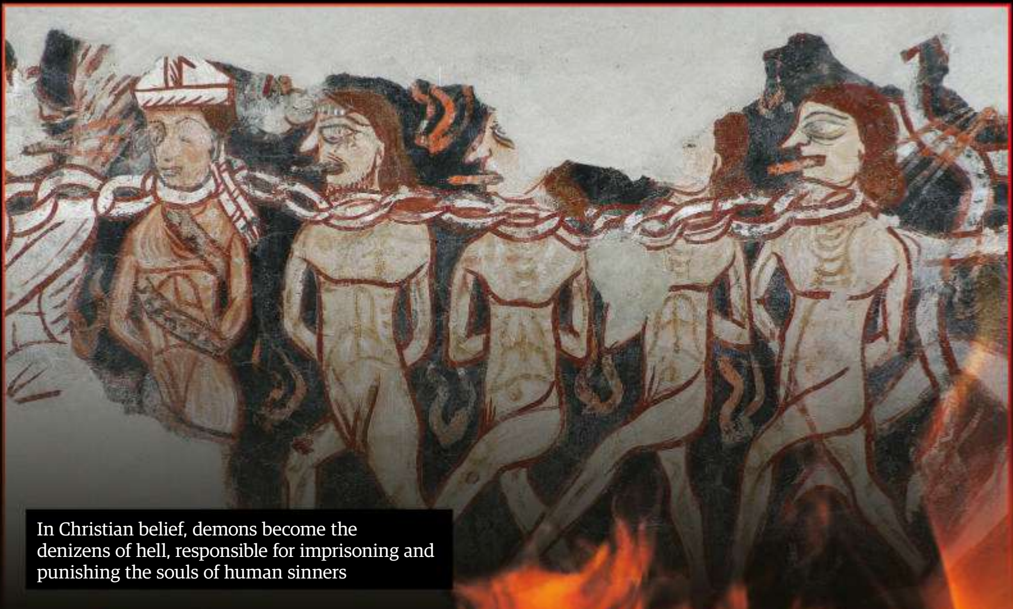
'The "creeper" approached him, The one having two horns and a tail. He floundered in his own faeces and urine, El collapsed like the dead.'

This 'creeper,' a horned demon with a tail seems very like the devil as conceived of in later Christian thought, though the devil never has such a strong effect on the Abrahamic God.

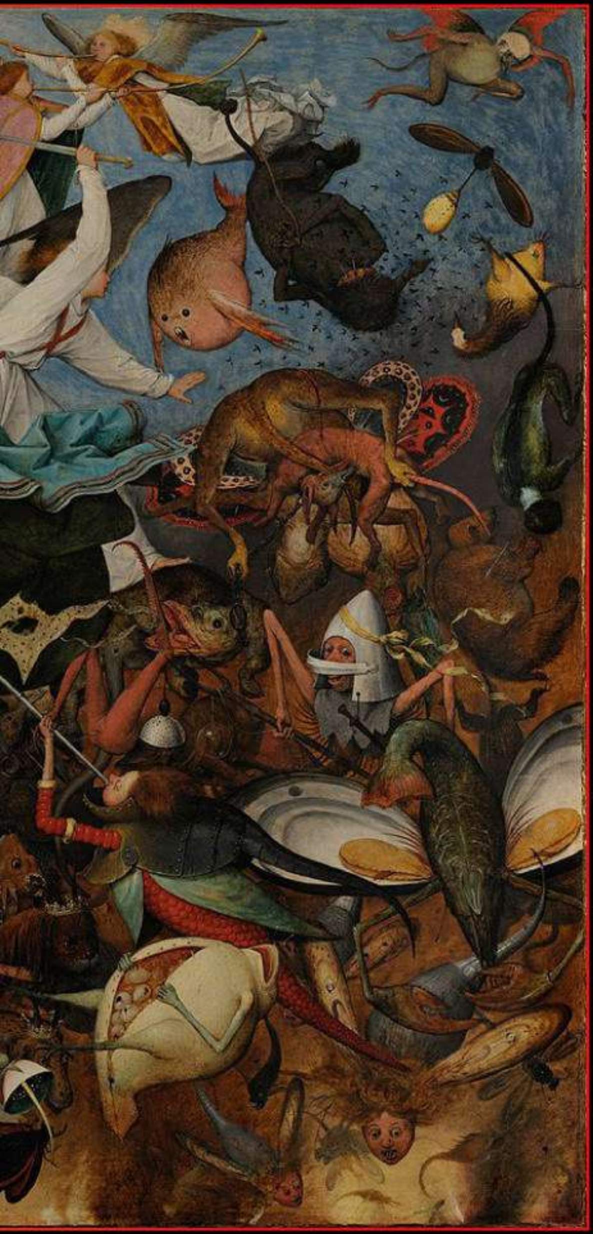
God in the Hebrew Testament seems to have used Satan for his own purposes. In the *Book of Job* a character called "the satan" visits God and the two decide to test God's faithful servant Job by afflicting him with various catastrophes and illnesses. The role of the satan here is as a tester - only later would a singular Satan become the prince of demons. As the leader of demonic hordes the Devil featured heavily in later Christian stories where he was seen to trick the unwary into giving up their souls. But conversely, many tales delighted in recording the ways that saints had outwitted Satan.



Some have interpreted demons as being angels who rebelled against God and so were banished from heaven



In Christian belief, demons become the denizens of hell, responsible for imprisoning and punishing the souls of human sinners



“Demonology developed throughout the early medieval period all the way to the 19th century”

angel Raphael is sent to drive away the demon. In Talmudic tradition Asmodeus is given an equally vicious wife called Agrath bat Mahalath who is queen of the demons and commands 10,000 lesser demons who do her bidding.

In the New Testament demons make startling appearances and Jesus’ ability to command them is taken as a sign of divinity by his followers, and a sign of evil by his opponents. In the *Gospel of Matthew* we hear how “Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.” But “when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.’”

Despite the opposition of some, Jesus appears to have continued his campaign against demons. In the region of the Gerasenes he met a “demon-possessed man”. Jesus asked the Demon’s name. “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” The demons are then thrown out of the man into a passing herd of 2,000 pigs who then cast themselves into the sea. Jesus empowered his disciples to also cast out demons. We are told “they drove out many demons” which suggests the world is riddled with demons. Since the Bible declared demons to be real, Christian thinkers in the West for hundreds of years had no doubt about their existence.

FALLEN BEINGS

There is a problem lurking at the heart of all monotheistic religions. Known as the problem of evil, it asks how evil can exist if there is an all-powerful and benevolent deity running the universe. One way of solving the problem of evil has been to lay the blame for bad things at the feet of a vast variety of demons. Where did the demons come from though, if God did not create evil beings? Demons, it has been proposed, are the victims of their own fall from grace.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth, and then he made angels. According to the *Book of Enoch* among these angels were 200 Watchers. They saw saw humans and lusted after them. The fruit of their couplings were giants. Among the Watchers one called “Azâzêl taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates.” According to this text God ascribes all sin to the action of Azâzêl.

While none of the central texts of the Abrahamic faiths use the phrase ‘Fallen Angel’ it has become a common belief that all demons were angels who have sinned and been thrown out of heaven. Several times in the New Testament there are references to Satan having fallen from heaven. In Islam too we find Iblis, an angel who refuses to bow down to Adam and is made to tempt humans to test their faith.

MODERN DEMONS

With many religions agreeing that demons really existed it became imperative for the faithful to understand who these demons were and how to avoid their clutches.

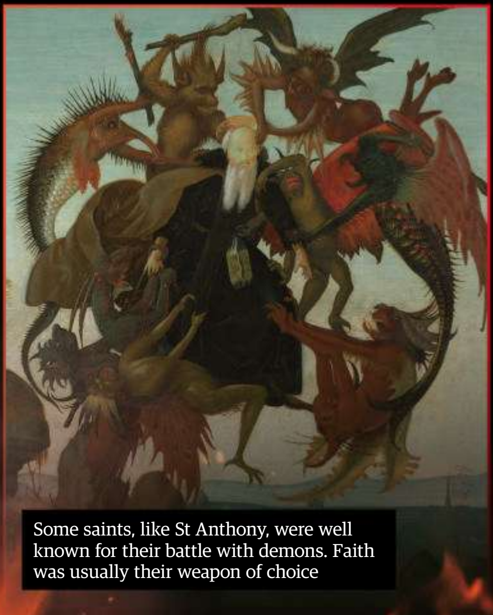
Demonology developed throughout the early medieval period all the way to the 19th century. In one early text, *The Testament of Solomon*, we find that each demon is ruled by an angel. If we can learn the name of that angel we can control the demon under it. King Solomon had a magical ring to help him fight with demons - most afflicted by demons lacked any magical jewellery to aid them in their struggle.

Simple faith however was held up by many as sufficient to battle demons. Stories of the Desert Fathers, ascetics who retreated to deserts to avoid sin, are full of demonic attacks. St Anthony in particular was famous for struggling against hosts of demons until God drove them out.

In the late medieval period the number of demons exploded. Alphonso de Spina calculated that there were 133,316,666 demons created from fallen angels. With this number of demons available it was inevitable that demons would become specialised. Some targeted specific professions, like Titivillus who was blamed by scribes for sneaking errors into their writing. Others were more generic, like the Incubi and Succubi that seduced people into lustful sins.

Discussions of the types and powers of demons occupied many great minds. Even kings could be haunted by demons. James I of England (James VI of Scotland) wrote a book called *Daemonologie* to help his subjects better understand the risks they faced from demonic forces. Other thinkers sought out demons on purpose, however. In Renaissance magic, necromancy was used to call upon demons to reveal knowledge to them.

Today few believe in demons as powers in themselves that are constantly trying to attack people and lure them towards hell. But everyone speaks of their ‘personal demons’ to describe struggles with unwanted aspects of our personalities or behaviour.



Some saints, like St Anthony, were well known for their battle with demons. Faith was usually their weapon of choice

Images Getty

Creatures of the night

Vampires and zombies: creatures that have captured popular imagination

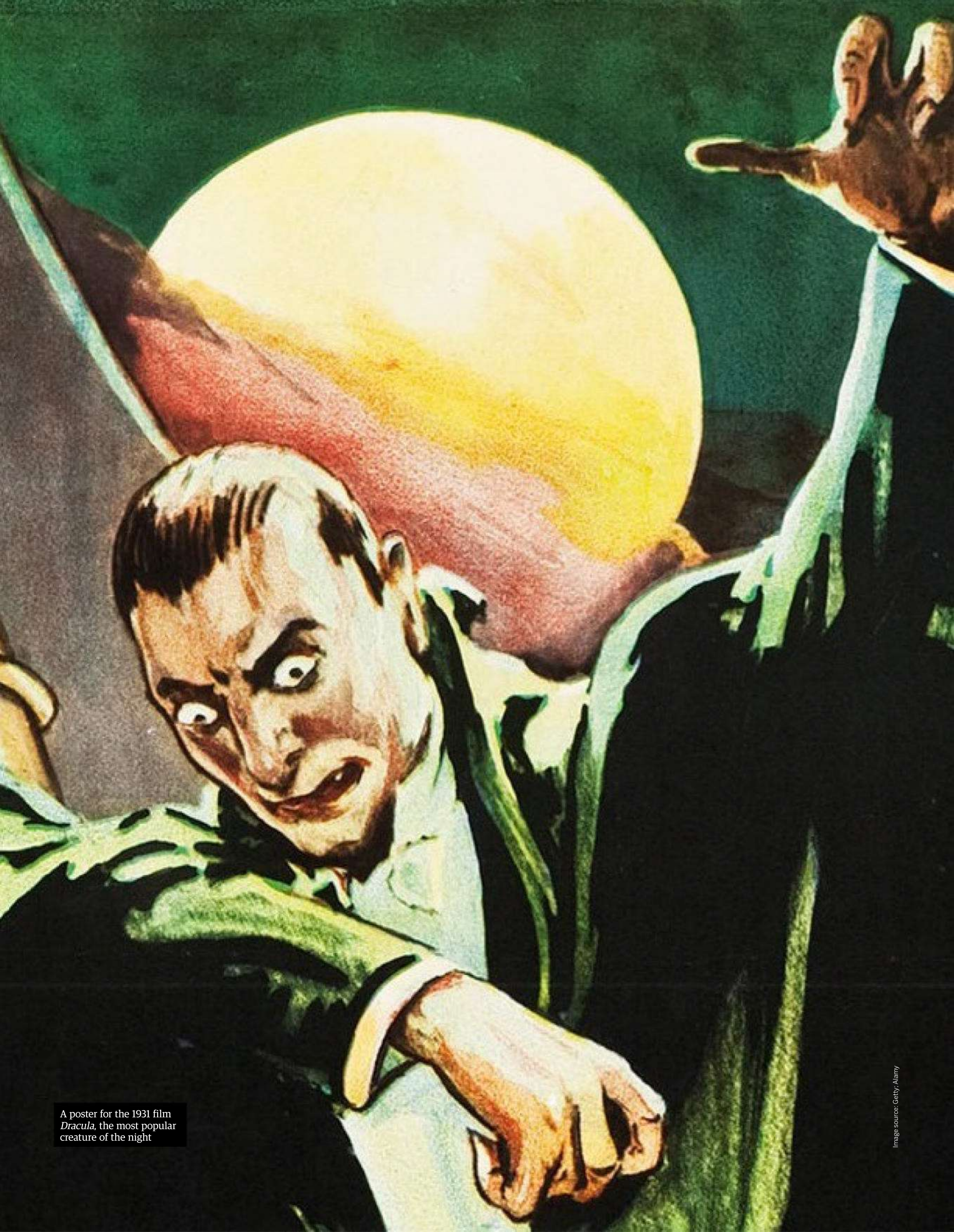
Written by Kate Waldock

Modern popular culture is riddled with the undead. They capture the imagination because of their closeness in resemblance to humanity. A vampire looks like a human, but has a bloodthirsty secret. The werewolf exists as human for much of the month, till a fateful full-mooned night turns them into a vicious animal. A zombie is the corpse of a human, not quite alive but bearing resemblance to those we love.

Western portrayals of these awful beings have seen an evolution from fearmongering to romantic idealisation, particularly in the case of the vampire. Christian and Western imperialistic influence on literature can be seen in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, where the titular vampire represents a threat to Western values. More recently, when we think of the vampire we see Edward Cullen's shimmering figure in blue, saving Bella Swan from her own mortality. Myths of these creatures of the night and their creation, appetites and behaviour exist far beyond the Western cultural imagination, however, and can be found worldwide and throughout history.

In Malaysia, the myth of the vampire may have provided an explanation for the death of babies, where the bloodsucking predators would be disguised as beautiful women. Navajo folklore states that Skinwalkers are able to shape shift into anything they want, reading minds and luring victims to their death. In Armenian lore, women can be condemned to live seven years of their life in wolf form as penance for evil sins. In South Africa, there was a prevailing belief that a dead person can be turned into a zombie by a child. The spell could only be broken by a sangoma, a traditional South African healer. Many of the most well-known creatures of the night fall into three distinct categories: the vampire, the were-creature, and the living dead.

> *"Western portrayals of these awful beings have seen an evolution from fearmongering to romantic idealisation, particularly in the case of the vampire"*



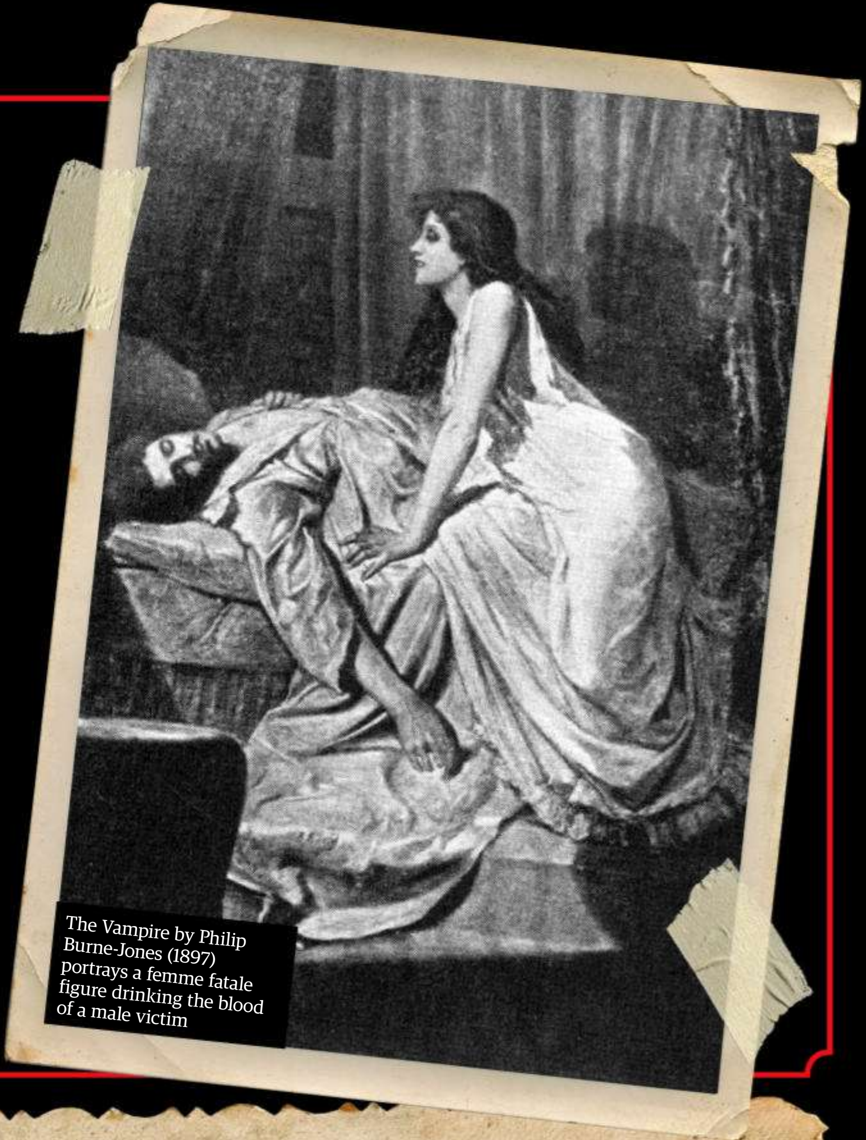
A poster for the 1931 film *Dracula*, the most popular creature of the night

Image source: Getty; Alamy

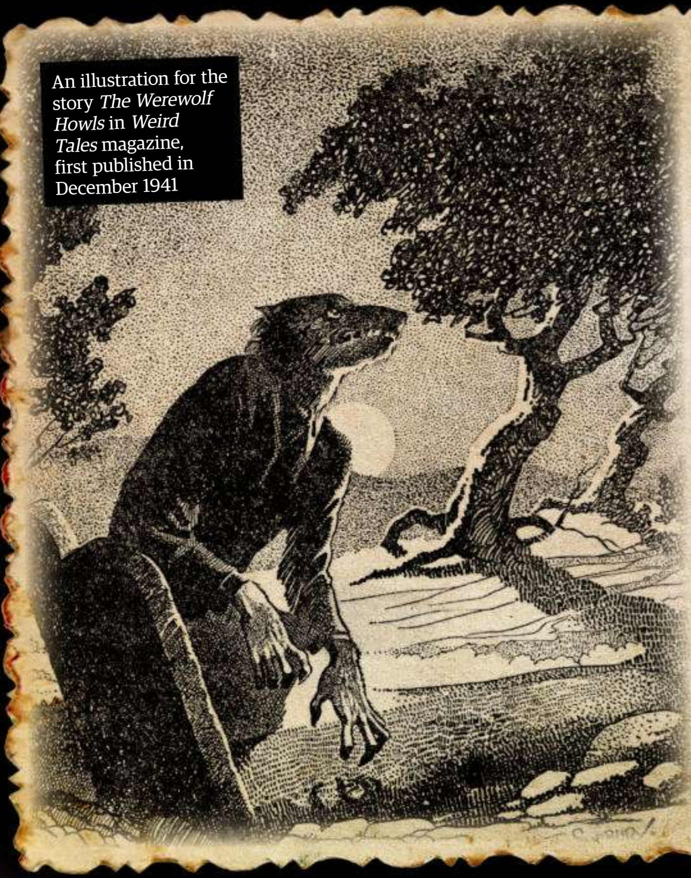
Bloodthirsty creatures of the night

The idea of the bloodthirsty vampire speaks to a fear of ravening death reaching out beyond the grave to claim its victims

Vampires have captured the public imagination more recently over the years due to the massive success of book saga *Twilight*, but the myth of the vampire dates back further than the Romanian castle of Dracula and stretches across the world. One of the earliest known myths of the vampire comes from the Persians, where archaeologists have found depictions of creatures with bloody appetites on pottery. The term vampire, alongside the popular portrayal of the mythic creature, most likely comes from Eastern European etymology, where the myth has prevailed longest. Historians tend to agree that across Europe, this belief came from symptoms of diseases such as porphyria (sensitivity to sunlight) or rabies (biting). Modern perceptions of the vampire are borne out in 18th and 19th century Gothic literature, where the vampire symbolised the "Other": a subversive foreign being who has designs on destroying Western Christian values.



The Vampire by Philip Burne-Jones (1897) portrays a femme fatale figure drinking the blood of a male victim



An illustration for the story *The Werewolf Howls* in *Weird Tales* magazine, first published in December 1941

The shapeshifting myth of the werewolf

Based in one of the oldest known myths, the werewolf is often a sign of divine wrath

In European folklore, the werewolf is a human turned wolf on the night of a full moon. The origin of the werewolf exists across the globe, with one particular theory coming from the Proto-Indo-European mythology of the lycanthropic initiation of a warrior class of young single men. The word lycanthropy comes from the Greek myth of King Lycaon, a man transformed into a wolf due to killing and serving up his child to a visiting god. A person can become a werewolf via the curse of a witch or from a bite by another werewolf. Historically, moral panic would fuel accusations of werewolf attacks and the persecution of people accused of being werewolves. In one case, a serial killer called Gilles Garnier was convicted of being a werewolf in 1573. Modern werewolf belief even includes a rare psychiatric condition called lycanthropy where a person believes that they are a wolf.

> *"The word lycanthropy comes from the Greek myth of King Lycaon"*

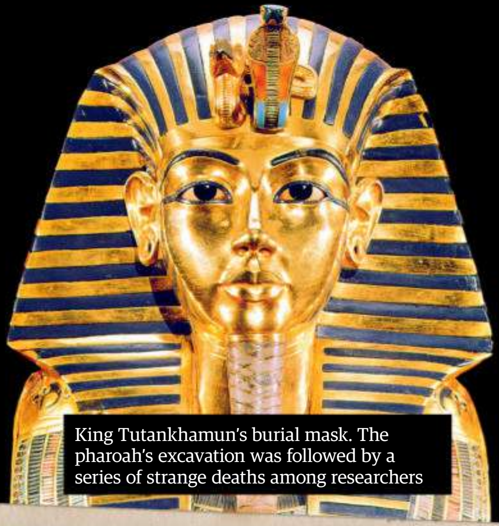
The many forms of the undead

From roving revenants and sinister zombies to the cursed consequences of desecrating graves, mythology ancient and modern is stiff with chilling tales of the deceased that refuse to stay dead and buried

The undead comes in many forms: zombies, ghouls, revenants and mummies being a few among many. Human fascination with our feelings of horror toward the uncanny is in this case conceptualised through the fear of almost-being, or not quite dying.

Among one of the distinctive denizens of the undead is the revenant. Hailing from the French word for 'returning', a revenant refers to the myth of the re-animated corpse. The term revenant can be used as a catch-all term for the many varieties of the undead, although its 12th century origins take on a ghostly feel, as believers of the revenant feared its role was to come back to life from the grave to haunt the living. Revenant graves can be found across Europe, where stones are placed on parts of the body to prevent it from re-animating.

Similarly to revenants, ghouls are associated with graveyards. This term comes from the Arabic folklore tradition where ghouls exist in the desert, luring mortal victims out to kill and eat them. Modern and Westernised myths of the ghoul takes it to the graveyard, through Gothic literature, where the ghoul is seen as a formless evil being intent on feeding its bloodlust.

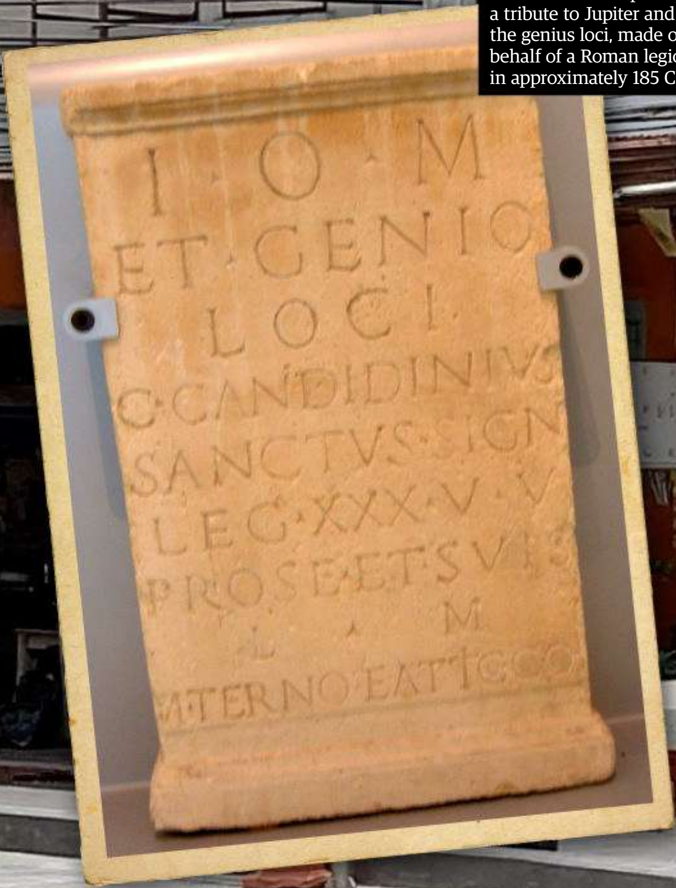

King Tutankhamun's burial mask. The pharoah's excavation was followed by a series of strange deaths among researchers

The zombie is a particularly gruesome incarnation of the undead. Popular cultural imagination of zombies is that of an epidemic spreading across the world, resulting in brain munching almost-humans. Interestingly, the myth of the zombie has origins in Hattian folklore dating back to the 17th century, where slaves thought they'd become a member of the walking dead if they committed suicide.

A later myth of an undead being that has a basis in ancient history is that of the mummy. The "curse" of Tutankhamun, where archaeologists died in mysterious circumstances after excavating the tomb, captured the imagination of storytellers, leading to many tales of the curse.

A popular depiction of zombies in the 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*, directed by George A Romero

Image source: Getty; Alamy



I O M
ET·GENIO
LOCI
C·CANDIDINIVS
SANCTVS·SIGN
LEG·XXX·V·V
PRO·SE·ET·SVIS
L M
MATERNO·ET·ATTICO

This votive inscription is a tribute to Jupiter and the genius loci, made on behalf of a Roman legion in approximately 185 CE

Spirits of place

From the Roman genius loci to the guardian spirit belief found across Asia, many cultures have honoured the supernatural watchers that keep their homes safe

Written by Catherine Curzon

These spirit houses in Bangkok offer guardian spirits a place to shelter and receive offerings that will ensure their continued favour

Dating from approximately 1910, this spirit house stood in Malawi. It was constructed by the Ngoni people to honour the genii locorum of their own beliefs

Across the Roman Empire, altars dedicated to genii locorum were a familiar sight. They honoured the protective spirits of classical Rome, who watched over their own particular area. Each of the districts of Rome worshipped its own Lares Comitales, or guardian spirit, and these spirits were then brought together by Emperor Augustus as the Lares Augusti and Genius Augusti, to result in one all-protecting genius loci, the guardian of the vast, sprawling Roman Empire.

A genius loci is often depicted in Roman iconography as a youthful figure of celebration and plenty, usually holding a snake, a cornucopia or a patera (a libation bowl used for drinking and at sacrifices). The Romans believed that an individual spirit resided in every place, imbuing it with a unique character and offering it protection. Genii locorum are not the spirits of people who once lived, but nature spirits, as ancient as the world if not older.

Though examples of Roman genii locorum can be found as far afield as England, where carvings found in a Norman church constructed from Roman materials contains a celebratory figure holding a cornucopia and patera, they are not a uniquely Roman belief. In many Asian faiths, spirits of place are revered for their protective powers. It is not uncommon to see dedicated spirit houses, which are shrines in which they are offered shelter. Often beautifully decorated, offerings are left in these structures to appease the spirits and ensure their continued favour.

In the West, genii locorum have survived through folklore and are often regarded as the intangible sense of what makes a particular place feel special. This might be something as physical as the surrounding land or the appearance of a place, but it could equally be the simple feeling that a particular location should be cherished, perhaps because of happy memories or a comforting atmosphere. Just as the Roman genius loci gave a place its unique atmosphere and identity, the Western spirit of place is essentially what makes a location feel particularly special.

In an increasingly secular world, the belief in a literal spirit protecting and watching over a location is no longer as common as once it was. However, the genius loci survives in sense and memory, in the way that some places have their own, indefinable essence. As long as we seek out places that feel special, where we feel nurtured and safe and that we nurture in return, the genii locorum will continue to flourish.

Images source: Getty; Wiki - Chainwit; Wiki - Kleuske

Be fae, do crimes

From innocent woodland sprites to mischievous agents of chaos, fairy folk have emerged from folklore to occupy a unique place in the imagination of humankind

Written by Catherine Curzon

Whether you know them as fae, faerie or just plain old fairies, they have fascinated humans since what seems like the dawn of storytelling, celebrated and feared alike for their supernatural powers. As with so many of the folktales that have survived through the centuries, there is no single origin story for these creatures, but many explanations have been put forward across eras and cultures to attempt to explain where they came from. To some, they are the spirits of the dead, to others magical tricksters or even demons and deities. Whatever their hidden origins, fairies exert a powerful fascination in us.

In our modern consciousness, fairies are generally depicted as tiny sprite-like figures, graceful and beautiful or impish and mischievous; they frequently sport wings and show a curiosity about humans, so long as those humans treat them with respect. According to folklore, fairies can be benevolent and helpful, but can make a fierce foe. Our relationship with fairies goes back into antiquity and whilst the term fairy only dates to the Middle Ages, their ancestors can be found worldwide - in Greek myths, indigenous American stories, and amongst many other cultures and regions. The modern English fairy comes from the old English word faerie, literally meaning a person from the land of the faes. In the tales of old France, a faierie or faie was a woman who was skilled in magic and could use words, plants, herbs and even the stones of the very Earth around her to make magic, just like the fairies who eventually took their name.

Whilst many explanations have been put forward to explain their origins, some scholars have posited that fairies are derived from the Persian parī, angelic beings from the writings of the ancient Achaemenid Empire. These winged nature spirits shared the beautiful appearance of fairies and, in common with them, were feared for their ability to abduct humans and carry them away to their kingdom. It is possible that tails of parī were brought to Europe by travellers and there became the foundations of the fairies of Gaelic and European folklore.

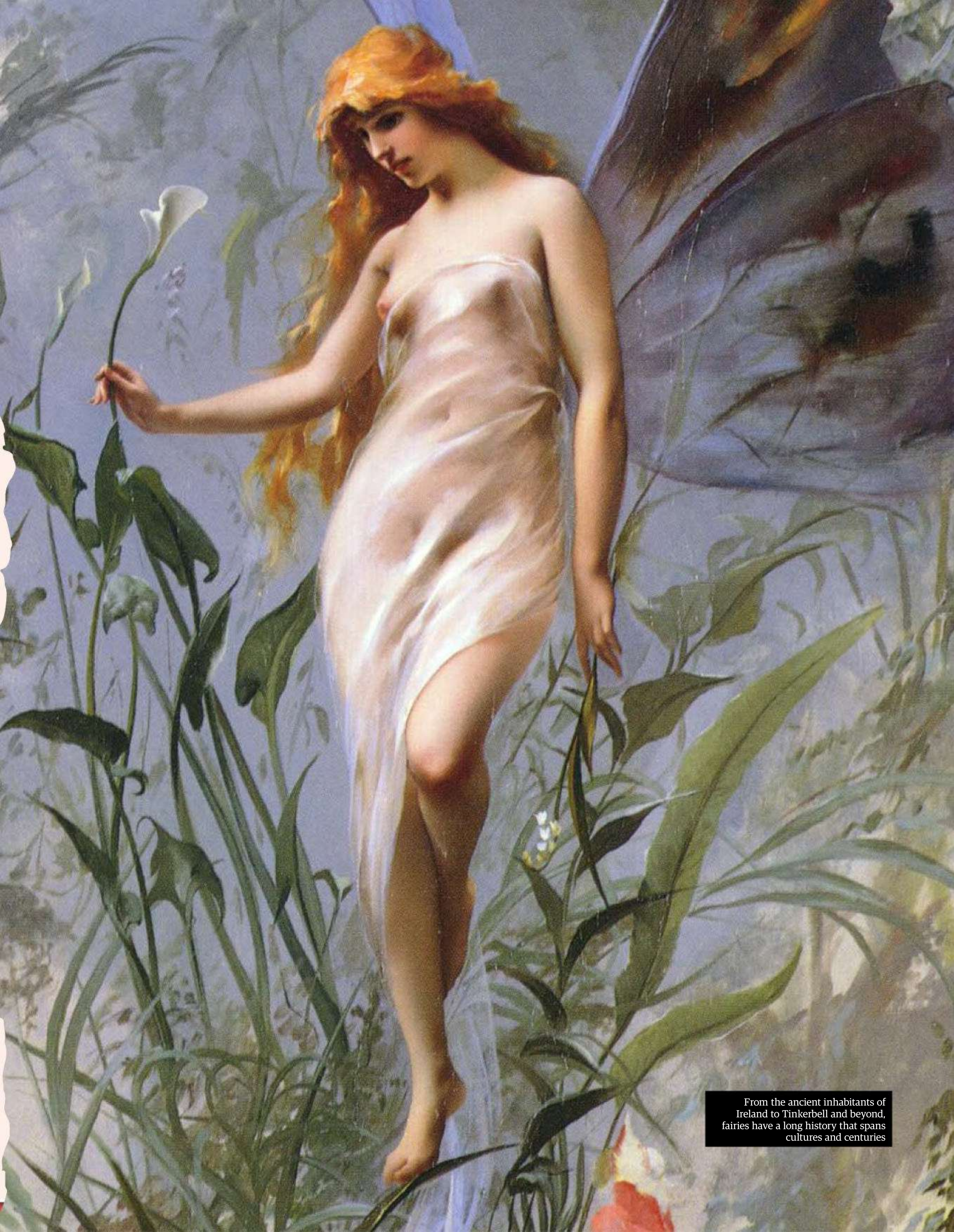
In Celtic tradition, fairies were known as Aos Sí who lived in enchanted mounds called fairy forts, entered via fairy doors. In Gaelic lore, these fairies were the surviving members of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a supernatural race of deities from pre-Christian Ireland. Though they were victorious in battles for the rule of Ireland with other mythical creatures, when the Milesians came from Iberia to settle in Ireland, the Aos Sí were defeated at last, this time by mortals. They surrendered and retreated to the otherworld, a supernatural realm which some believed was also home to the spirits of the dead. However, the fairies could not fully sever their relationship with the mortal world and frequently emerged from their fairy forts.

A fairy ring is a naturally occuring circular formation of fungi believed to be of supernatural origin and often attributed to dancing fairy folk

In many folk traditions, it is believed that any sign of fairy occupation, such as fairy rings, hawthorn trees or fairy forts, should be afforded great respect. If their territory was threatened, the fairies would retaliate with all their might and destroy or remove any object or person who had transgressed on their home. Houses would be built in places that didn't impinge on fairy territory. Buildings were built to accommodate fairy forts and roads, some having their front and back doors lining up perfectly, so that fairies could continue to go on their way without being inconvenienced.

Whilst fairies could be friends around the house, helping with chores and bringing good fortune, they should never be taken for granted. As recently as the 19th century, people followed Celtic traditions of leaving out bread, cream and other offerings for the fairy folk, to keep them happy. This wouldn't win them any friends

> *"Any sign of fairy occupation, such as fairy rings, should be afforded great respect"*



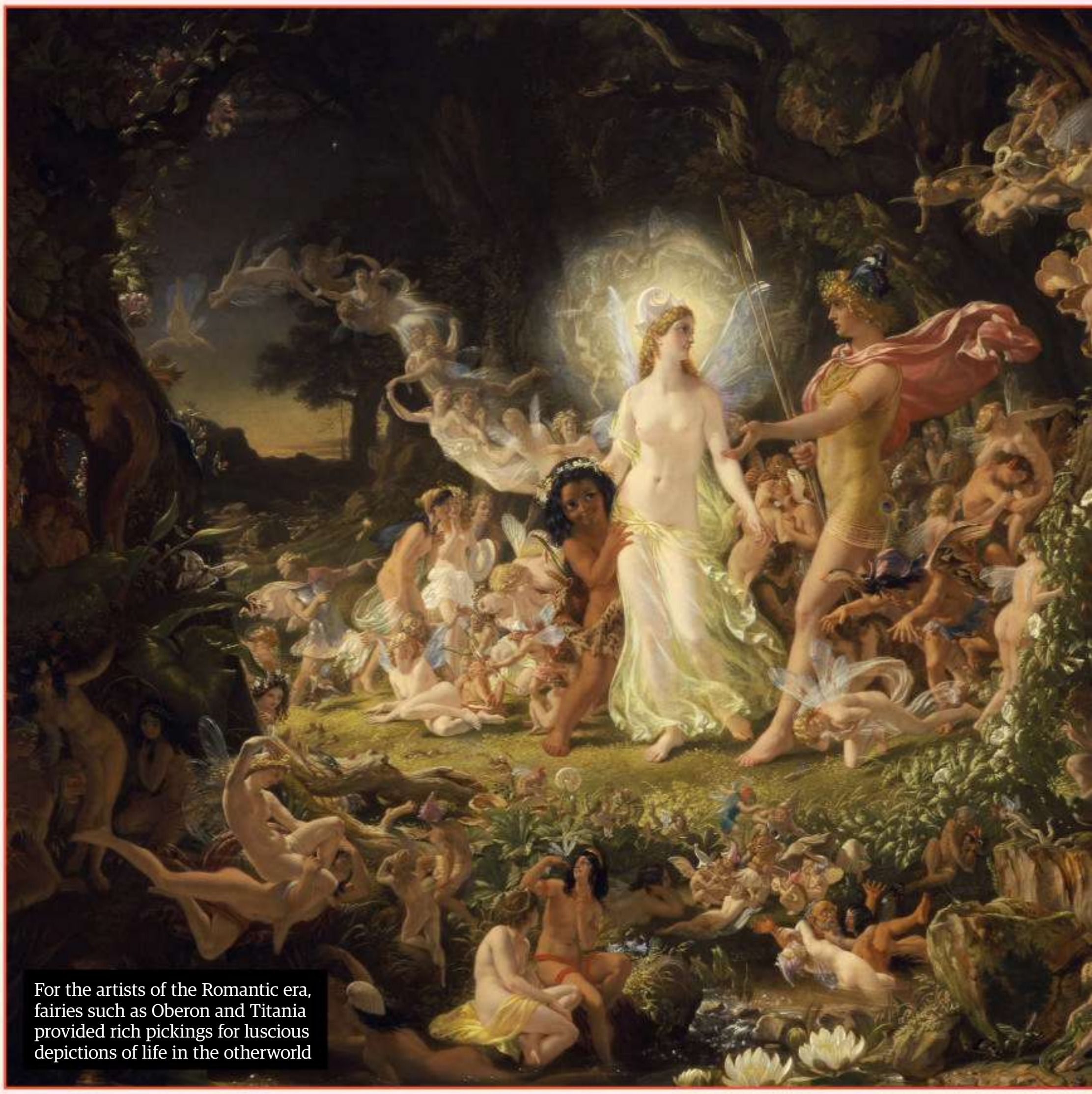
From the ancient inhabitants of Ireland to Tinkerbell and beyond, fairies have a long history that spans cultures and centuries

THE COTTINGLEY FAIRIES

In 1917, cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths captured photographs that purported to show fairies playing in a garden in Cottingley near Bradford, England. Though Elsie's father believed that his daughter had faked the images, her mother, Polly, was convinced that they were real and became determined to prove it. Thanks to Polly the photographs were exhibited and underwent expert analysis, which confirmed that no trickery had been used. Later experts, including those at Kodak, concurred that they were not trick photographs; they did not, however, confirm that the fairies were real.

In 1920, the girls captured even more of the creatures at the bottom of their garden, convincing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that they had indeed photographed fairies. Conan Doyle championed the girls' claims and though he found some supporters, plenty of people derided his claims. The Cottingley Fairies briefly became a cause célèbre, but interest eventually waned, and the girls faded into obscurity. More than 60 years later, Elsie and Frances finally admitted that they had faked all but one of the photographs, using cardboard cutouts from a children's book. Despite this, they maintained that the fairies were real.

Illustrations cut from *Princess Mary's Gift Book* convinced the creator of Sherlock Holmes that photographs showing real fairies had been taken by two little girls



For the artists of the Romantic era, fairies such as Oberon and Titania provided rich pickings for luscious depictions of life in the otherworld

> *"In 1895, the fear of a changeling was used as a defence in a murder case"*

among Newfoundland fairies, however, as bread was used to ward them off!

Most feared were the changelings, human-like creatures who fairies would leave in place of abducted human babies. While the child was taken into the otherworld, the sickly changeling would assume their place in the mortal world, where it would waste away and die. On rare occasions, an adult would be taken – most notably in Irish and Scandinavian lore – and often newly wed women or new mothers, who were married off to fairies or used as wet nurses. A log was left in place of the stolen wife, enchanted to resemble the abductee, which soon withered away and died. This fear of changelings crosses cultures and can be found in Cornish lore as well as Scottish, Irish, Germanic, Scandinavian and others, with each offering its own unique methods of protection against the phenomenon.

Some people actually believed that King Charles I was a changeling, and as recently as 1895, the fear of a changeling was used as a defence in a murder case by Michael Cleary and his cousins, who killed Cleary's wife, Bridget. The men claimed that they believed Bridget was a fairy changeling and had burned her alive to drive the fairy out. Whether the defence was true, or they had simply hoped to use it as a means of escaping a guilty verdict was never determined. Michael Cleary was found guilty of manslaughter and served 15 years.

In pagan beliefs, fairies were regarded as deities or the spirits of the dead, linked with appearances at burial mounds and with ancestral spirits who shared their home in the otherworld. These beliefs came under threat from the spread of Christianity, which sought to find an explanation for fairies within its framework as fallen or

demoted angels who had either joined Lucifer's revolt or remained neutral. Cast out of heaven, though not evil enough to be condemned to hell, they were instead caught between the two and left to dwell in Fairyland. In Scottish folklore, they paid the devil rent for their homeland, every seven years in the form of their fairest maiden. The cunning fairies, however, found a way to cheat, paying the fee with a changeling.

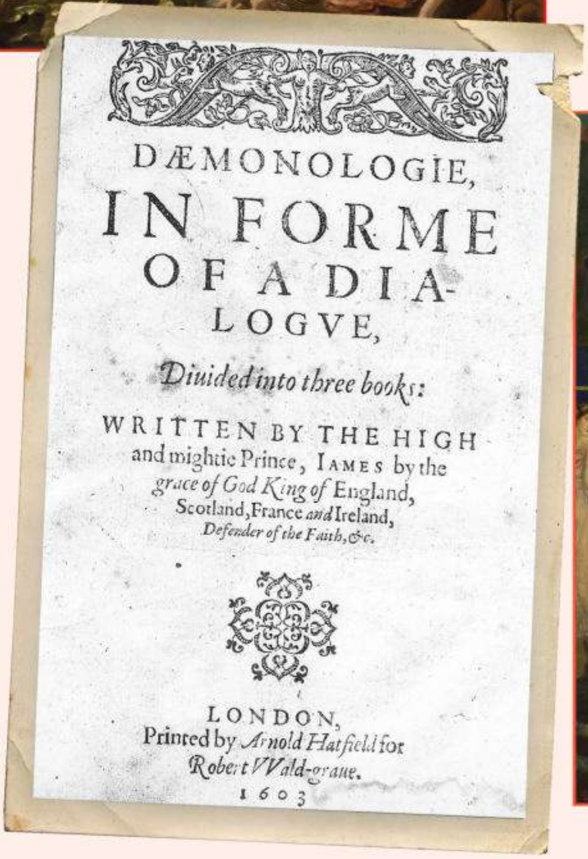
In his 16th century *Daemonologie*, King James I declared that fairies were demonic entities, who served witches and other black magicians. The elemental nature spirits, regarded in pre-Christian times as virtually gods of the natural world, had become (like many pagan entities) Christian demons. Christian belief and fairy folklore became intrinsically linked and whilst belief in fairies dwindled, superstitious people still took precautions to ensure that they and the fairies could live in harmony. Yet even in an era when fairies were considered creatures of myth, there were still some who believed they were as real and palpable as any other creature. 18th century poet William Blake even claimed to have witnessed a fairy funeral, as a procession of small creatures bore the corpse of one of their kind to his grave on a rose leaf. According to his account, they buried the body as they sang songs of remembrance, then flickered out of existence.

By the 19th century, fairies were no longer regarded as demonic, but once again as creatures from an ancient, forgotten world, uniquely connected to nature, thanks largely to the Celtic Revival. Theosophists, followers of an esoteric religion born out of Spiritualism, held the belief that fairies were angelic, elemental beings known as devas, who lived in the sun and could be seen by those whose third eye is activated. To Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a firm believer in fairies, they were butterfly-like creatures, hazy and flitting through the air in bright flashes of light and colour. Without them, there would be no germination, no growth and no life on Earth.

However, for most people in the Victorian era and beyond, the fae were creatures of folklore and romantic myth. They were the tempters of Rossetti's *Goblin Market* or, later, Peter Pan's diminutive sidekick, Tinkerbell. Depicted as beautiful creatures in Renaissance and Romantic literature and art, they were often characterised as powerful or unknowable figures, vaguely or explicitly threatening even as they cajoled and tempted humans to what was likely going to be their ruin.

From folklore to the physical realm, pagan reverence to Christian demonisation, fairies have enjoyed – or endured – a rich and fascinating relationship with humans spanning centuries. Sometimes the friend who sweeps the hearth or cures a sickly patient and sometimes the trickster who sprits away a human baby and leaves a dying changeling in its place, they have worn many guises. Today, in a world that is perhaps less connected to folklore and the natural Earth than ever, their fascination has not diminished. And as people seek a way back to a simpler way of life and a deeper means of connecting to the world around them, there are likely to be plenty more chapters in the ongoing story of the fairy folk.

> The terms fae or fairy were often used to indicate a sorceress or person with magical abilities, such as with Morgan le Fay of Arthurian legend



DÆMONOLOGIE,
IN FORME
OF A DIA-
LOGVE,
Diuided into three books:
WRITTEN BY THE HIGH
and mightie Prince, IAMES by the
grace of God King of England,
Scotland, France *and* Ireland,
Defender of the Faith, &c.

LONDON,
Printed by *Arnold Hatfield* for
Robert VValdgraue.
1603

In ancient folklore, fairies were the creatures who occupied the Earth before humans. They enjoyed a magical relationship with the natural world

HISTORY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

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HISTORY OF THE

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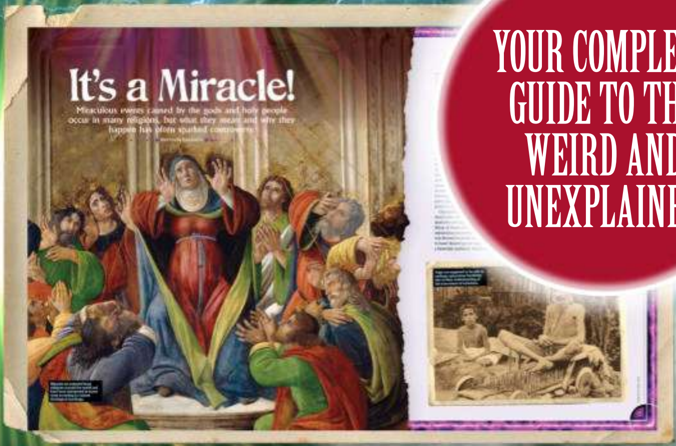
YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE WEIRD AND UNEXPLAINED

In the shadow of the supernatural

Since the dawn of mankind people have turned to other-worldly explanations in their efforts to make sense of events and apparitions that seem to defy the laws of nature

What is the paranormal?

Explore a history of supernatural belief through the ages and around the world

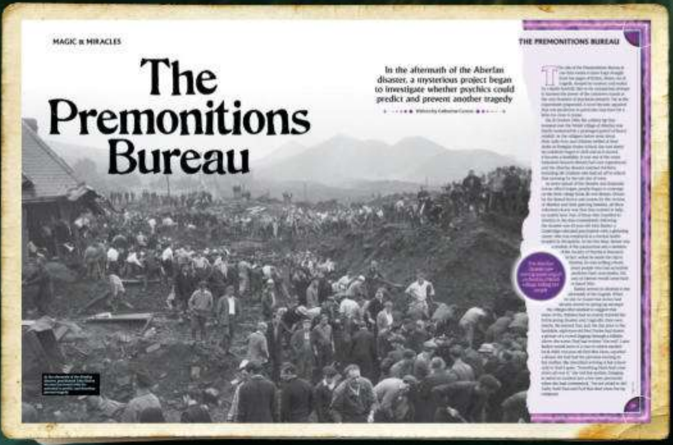


It's a Miracle!

Miraculous events caused by the gods and holy people occur in many religions, but what they mean and why they happen has often sparked controversy

Miraculous and magical

Discover the people and events that have defied the laws of nature and physics



MAGIC & MIRACLES

The Premonitions Bureau

In the aftermath of the Aberfan disaster, a mysterious project began to investigate whether psychics could predict and prevent another tragedy

THE PREMONITIONS BUREAU

Bizarre beliefs

Unveil some of the strangest ideas and what their believers hope to gain from them

WEIRD CREATURES

Creatures of the night

Vampires and Zombies: creatures that have captured popular imagination

"One of the earliest known myths of the vampire comes from the Persians, where archaeologists have found depictions of creatures with bloody dies on pottery"

Cryptids and creatures

Examine some of the terrifying monsters that have been reported over the centuries

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